

**THE TREATMENT AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN  
IN THE POOR LAW INSTITUTIONS OF  
WORCESTERSHIRE 1834 TO 1871.**

by

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### **SYNOPSIS.**

This study related to the way the New Poor Law was administered with regard to inmate children in the County of Worcester between 1834 and 1871. It dealt with the influence of Old Poor Law practices on the New Poor Law and examined the treatment, training and education offered in workhouses, together with the employment obtained by "long stay" workhouse children on leaving such institutions. It demonstrated the effectiveness of the treatment obtained in attaining the prime objective of avoiding lifelong pauperism. However, an attempt was made to equate this advantage with the obvious disadvantages of institutionalisation and the associated losses of freedom implied. The impact of the workhouse, a "total institution"(as defined by Goffman (1968)) on the child inmates and those employed to care for them was considered. Treatment was tightly controlled by a set of Rules and Regulations based on the utilitarian principles of "National Uniformity and "Less Eligibility", although these constraining principles was not adhered to after about 1836 in the case of child inmates. Boards of Guardians' Minute Books were rigorously used to establish local practices, which were then related to national policy, so that differences between rural and urban unions became apparent. The earlier studies by Ross (1955) and others had examined national Poor Law policy by using Central Poor Law Authority papers as their starting point. The findings for Worcestershire proved most congruent with those of Digby (1976 and 1978) who significantly had used similar sources in her study of Norfolk. The findings for Worcestershire Unions supported Himmelfarb's ideas (1984) by illustrating the changed attitude towards poverty and hence its changing definition between 1834 and 1871.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.**

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#### ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS THESIS.

Acc.	Accession Number.
A.P.L.C.	Assistant Poor Law Commissioner.
B.M.L.	Barnes' Medical Library (Birmingham University)
B.P.L.	Birmingham Public Library Local Studies Department.
B.U.L.	Birmingham University Library.
C.U.P.	Cambridge University Press.
D.N.B.	Dictionary of National Biography.
D.P.L.	Dudley Public Library Local Studies Department.
H.L.L.	House of Lords' Library.
H.M.I.	Her Majesty's Inspector.
I.U.P.	Irish Universities Press.
Loc.	Location.
N.R.C.	Newcastle Royal Commission.
O.U.P.	Oxford University Press.
Par.	Parcel.
P.C.C.E.	Privy Council Committee on Education.
P.L.B.	Poor Law Board.
P.L.C.	Poor Law Commission.
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers.
P.R.O.	Public Record Office, Kew.
Q.	Question Number.
R.K.P.	Routledge and Kegan Paul.
S.C.	Select Committee.
S.P.C.K.	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge.
S.S.B.A.	Scottish School Books Association.
W.C.R.O.	Worcester County Record Office, St Clement's Church, Fish Street, Worcester.

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## INTRODUCTION.

Several generations of the English working class grew up in the shadow of the workhouse. Those individuals who were in insecure employment, were lowly paid or were unfortunate enough to be widowed, orphaned or deserted feared incarceration in the workhouse and the taint ensured by the epithet 'pauper'. For ninety five years from 1834 the poorest members of the working classes feared the workhouse, whilst their middle and upper class contemporaries apparently believed that danger lay in the ready acceptance by the 'dangerous classes', as they knew them, of the advantages of workhouse life. This indicated the supreme ignorance of the motivations and aspirations of the 'lower orders' by their social superiors. Even after the abolition of the Local Government Board in 1929, in the eighteen years before the National Health Service was created, the working classes still feared the taint of the workhouse. It was a fear that was very real to the author of this study in his childhood because it caused his grandparents to reject medical care and to fear hospitals, because they were considered to be merely an extension of the old workhouse system. Here then was the motivation for this study - the simple question: What was the workhouse and was it to be feared?

The first and most essential of all conditions, a principle which we find universally admitted, even by

those whose practice is at variance with it, is that his [the pauper's] situation on the whole shall not be made really or apparently so eligible as the situation of the independent labourer of the lowest class.<sup>1</sup>

This state was known as "Less Eligibility" and formed a major tenet of New Poor Law administration.

Uniformity in the administration of relief we deem essential as a means, first, of reducing the perpetual shifting from parish to parish, and fraudulent removals to parishes where profuse management prevails from parishes where the management is less profuse; secondly, of preventing the discontents which arise among the paupers maintained under the less profuse managements of adjacent districts; and, thirdly, of bringing the management, which consists in detail, more closely within the public control.<sup>2</sup>

These quotations indicate two ways in which the Commission of Inquiry into the Poor Laws justified the principles of Poor Law Administration after 1834. All paupers, no matter what their parish of origin, were to be treated similarly in a fashion that would not make the pauper's condition desirable. The result of this was that rural mendicants were to receive the same treatment

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1. CHECKLAND, S. and E.O.A. The Poor Law Report of 1834, Penguin, 1974, p.395.

2. Ibid, pp.396-7.

in the workhouse as their more threatening urban contemporaries, although the circumstances of rural places differed considerably from urban ones. This system was soon found to be impractical. The treatment administered fairly quickly adapted to local conditions as the Poor Law Administration was intended to be a reactive system. This study investigates the treatment of children in the workhouses of the thirteen Worcestershire Poor Law Unions in the period 1834 to 1871. It seeks to examine the way in which children were treated, educated and trained, also by whom they were cared for, and the outcome of their treatment as indicated by the occupations they obtained on leaving the workhouse. The study examines whether their treatment was indeed uniform and less eligible. This necessitates an understanding of Worcestershire in the period 1834 to 1871 and indicated a considerable change in the attitude to poverty and the way in which poverty was defined. It also demonstrated that the workhouse as a "total institution" had a profound and continuing influence on its child inmates.

Under the Old Poor Law Worcestershire was administered as separate parishes for the purpose of relieving the poor. There were exceptions to this at Kidderminster, Upton-on-Severn and Worcester where unions of parishes had been formed under Gilbert's Act in 1782.<sup>3</sup> The

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3. 22 Geo, III c.83.



parishes of Worcester in 1834 are shown on the map (Figure 1.1). Noticeably some parishes were enclaves within adjacent counties as in the case of Dudley or Shipston-on-Stour. For the purpose of administration, however, these places were regarded as parts of Worcestershire. When the Poor Law Unions were created in 1834 county boundaries were ignored and some unions contained parishes from more than one county. Martley Union contained places in Herefordshire, Dudley Union places in Staffordshire and Shipston-on-Stour Union places in both Gloucestershire and Warwickshire. The thirteen Worcestershire Poor Law Unions chosen for investigation are shown on the map (Figure 1.2 and in Figure 1.3). The decision was made to investigate all unions named after places in Worcestershire.

Worcestershire was a predominantly rural county in the early nineteenth century. It was divided from north-east to south-west by the river Severn and from north-west to south-east by the rivers Avon and Teme (See Figure 1.4). There was high ground to the north and west and undulating countryside elsewhere. The river valleys were extremely fertile and were used for market gardening. There was good arable and grazing land for cattle on the lower slopes in the south and east of the county, and good sheep-pastures on the high land in the north and west. Enclosures in Worcestershire were carried out early and by 1790 over half of the county was enclosed. The county was thus rich agriculturally and the products of the farms was used to support various industries.



FIGURE 1.2. WORCESTERSHIRE

scale 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 miles

KEY.

1. Alcester Union.
2. Bromsgrove Union.
3. Bromyard Union.
4. Cleobury Mortimer Union.
5. Droitwich Union.
6. Dudley Union.
7. Evesham Union.
8. Kidderminster Union.
9. King's Norton Union.
10. Ledbury Union.
11. Martley Union.
12. Newent Union.
13. Pershore Union.
14. Stratford-on-Avon Union.
15. Shipston-on-Stour Union.
16. Solihull Union.
17. Stourbridge Union.
18. Stow-on-the-Wold Union.
19. Tenbury Wells Union.
20. Tewkesbury Union.
21. Upton-on-Severn Union.
22. West Bromwich Union.
23. Winchcombe Union.
24. Worcester Union.

The Unions where records have been used in this study are underlined.

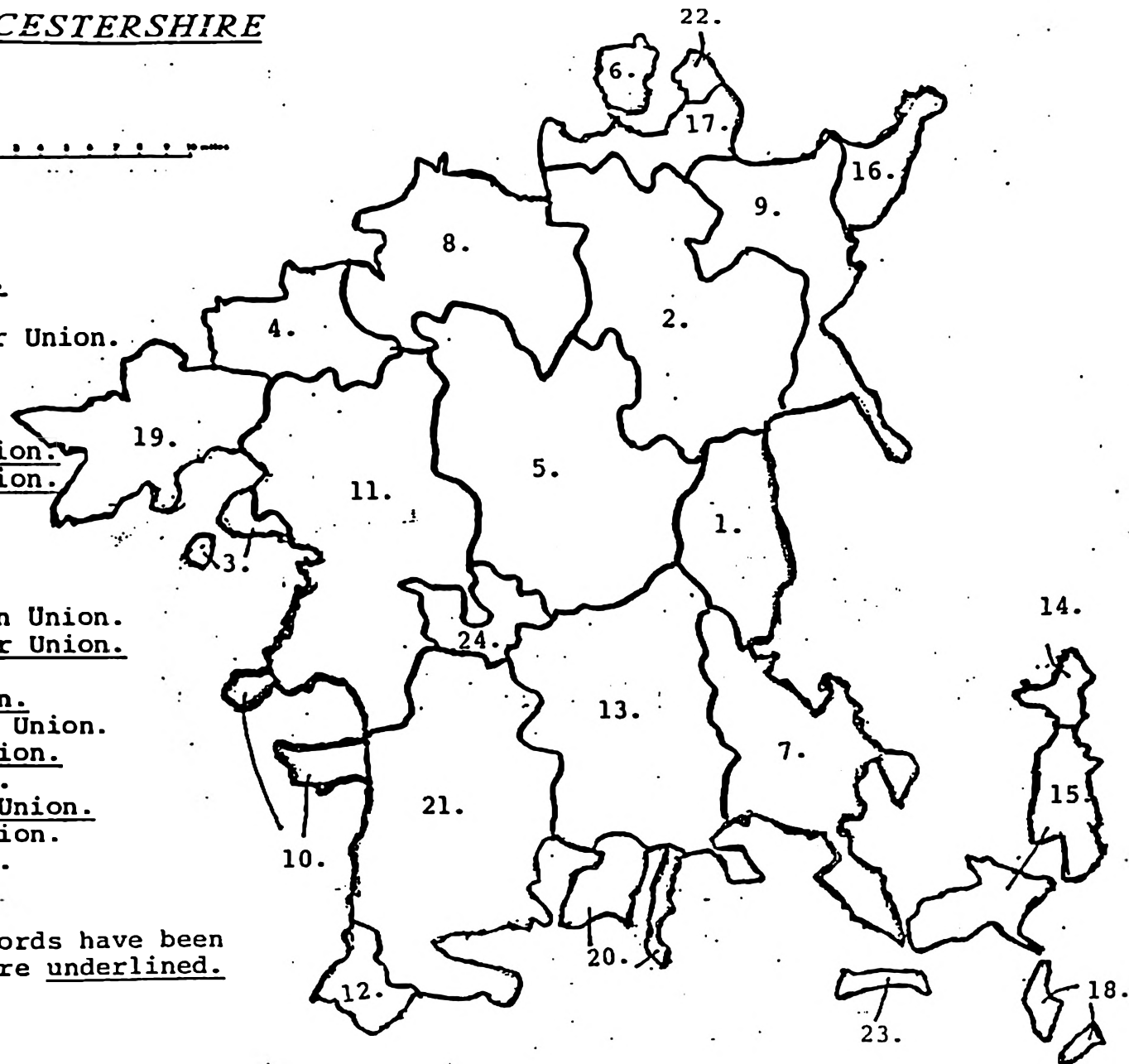


FIGURE 1.3.

POOR LAW UNIONS.

1. ALCESTER UNION.

Peckenharn.  
Inkberrow.  
Abbots Morton.  
Oldberrow.

2. BROMSGROVE UNION.

Pedmore.  
Bagley.  
Clent.  
Romsley.  
Hunnington.  
Frankley.  
Belbroughton.  
Bromsgrove.  
Coston Backett.  
Alvechurch.  
Stoke Prior.  
Tardebigge.  
Redditch.

3. BROMYARD UNION.

Lower Sapey.  
Edvin Loach.  
Acton Beauchamp.

4. CLEOBURY MORTIMER UNION.

Bayton.  
Mable.  
Rock.

5. DROITWICH UNION.

Hartlebury.  
Elmley Lovatt.  
Elmbridge.  
Upton Warren.  
Grafton Manor.  
Ombersley.  
Doverdale.  
Hampton Lovatt.  
Crutch.  
Dodderhill.  
Westwood Park.  
Droitwich St. Nicholas.  
Droitwich St. Andrew.  
Droitwich St. Peter.  
Salwarpe.  
Hadzor.  
Hanbury.

Martin Hussingtree.

Claines.  
Hindlip.  
Oddingley.  
Bimbleton.  
Bradley.  
Warndon.  
Tibberton.  
Crowle.  
Buddington.

6. DUDLEY UNION.

Dudley.

7. EVESHAM UNION.

Rouse Lench.  
Church Lench.  
Norton.  
Barvington.  
Cleeve Prior.  
North & Middle Littleton.  
Offenham.  
South Littleton.  
Church Honeybourne.  
Evesham All Saints.  
Evesham St. Lawrence.  
Badsey.  
Bretforton.  
Great Hampton.  
Bengeworth.  
Wickhamford.  
Sedgeberrow.  
Broadway.

8. KIDDERMINSTER UNION.

Wolverley.  
Churchill.  
Kidderminster.  
Broom.  
Bewdley.  
Ridlesford.  
Lower Mitton.  
Stone.  
Chaddesley Corbett.  
Rushock.

9. KING'S NORTON UNION.

Northfield.  
King's Norton.  
Beoley.

10. LEDBURY UNION.

Mathon.

11. MARTLEY UNION.

Pensax.  
Stockton-on-Teme.  
Abberley.  
Areley Kings.  
Astley.  
Stanford-on-Teme.  
Shelsley Beauchamp.  
Great Whitley.  
Martley.  
Shrawley.  
Little Whitley.  
Shelsley Walsh.  
Clifton-on-Teme.  
Wichenford.  
Bolt.  
Grimley.  
Kenswick.  
Ballow.  
Doddenham.  
Broadwas.  
Cotheridge.  
Knightwick.  
Lulsley.  
Suckley.  
Alfrick.  
Leigh.  
Bransford.

12. NEWENT UNION.

Redmarley D'Abitot.  
Staunton.

13. PERSHORE UNION.

Grafton Plyford.  
Kington.  
Dormston.  
Broughton Hackett.  
Spetchley.  
Bredicot.  
Churchill.  
Upton Snodsbury.  
North Piddle.  
Flyford Flavell.  
Abberton.  
Whittington.  
Whiteladies Aston.

Naunton Beauchamp.

Norton.  
Stoulton.  
Peopleton.  
Bishampton.  
Pinvin.  
Throckmorton.  
Wyre Piddle.  
Fladbury.  
Pirton.  
Besford.  
Pershore St. Andrew.  
Pershore Holy Cross. Wick.  
Cropthorne.  
Defford.  
Birlingham.  
Great Comberton.  
Little Comberton.  
Bricklehampton.  
Strensham.  
Eckington.  
Elmley Castle.  
Netherton.

14. STRATFORD-ON-AVON UNION.

Alderminster.

15. SHIPTON-ON-STOUR UNION.

Tredington.  
Shipston-on-Stour.  
Blockley.  
Tidmington.

16. SOLIHULL UNION.

Yardley.

17. STOURBRIDGE UNION.

Oldswinford.  
Lye.  
Cradley.  
Halesowen.

18. STOW-ON-THE-WOLD UNION.

Evenloade.  
Daylesford.

19. TENBURY WELLS UNION.

Knighton-on-Teme.  
Lindridge.

Tenbury Wells.  
Rochford. Eastham.  
Hanley Child.  
Hanley William.  
Bockleton.  
Kyre Magna.  
Kyre Parva.  
Orleton.

20. TENNESBURY UNION.

Bredons Norton.  
Bredon.  
Overbury.  
Teddington.  
Pendock.  
Chaseley.

21. UPTON-ON-SEVERN UNION.

Newland.  
Powick.  
Kensley.  
Madresfield.  
Great Malvern.  
Severn Stoke.  
Hanley Castle.  
Croome D'Abitot.  
Little Malvern.  
Welland.  
Upton-on-Severn.  
Earls Croome.  
Bill Croome.  
Ripple.  
Castle Morton.  
Longdon.  
Queenshill.  
Birtsmorton.  
Berrow.  
Bushley.  
Eldersfield.

22. WEST BROMWICH UNION.

Oldbury.

23. WINCHCOMBE UNION.

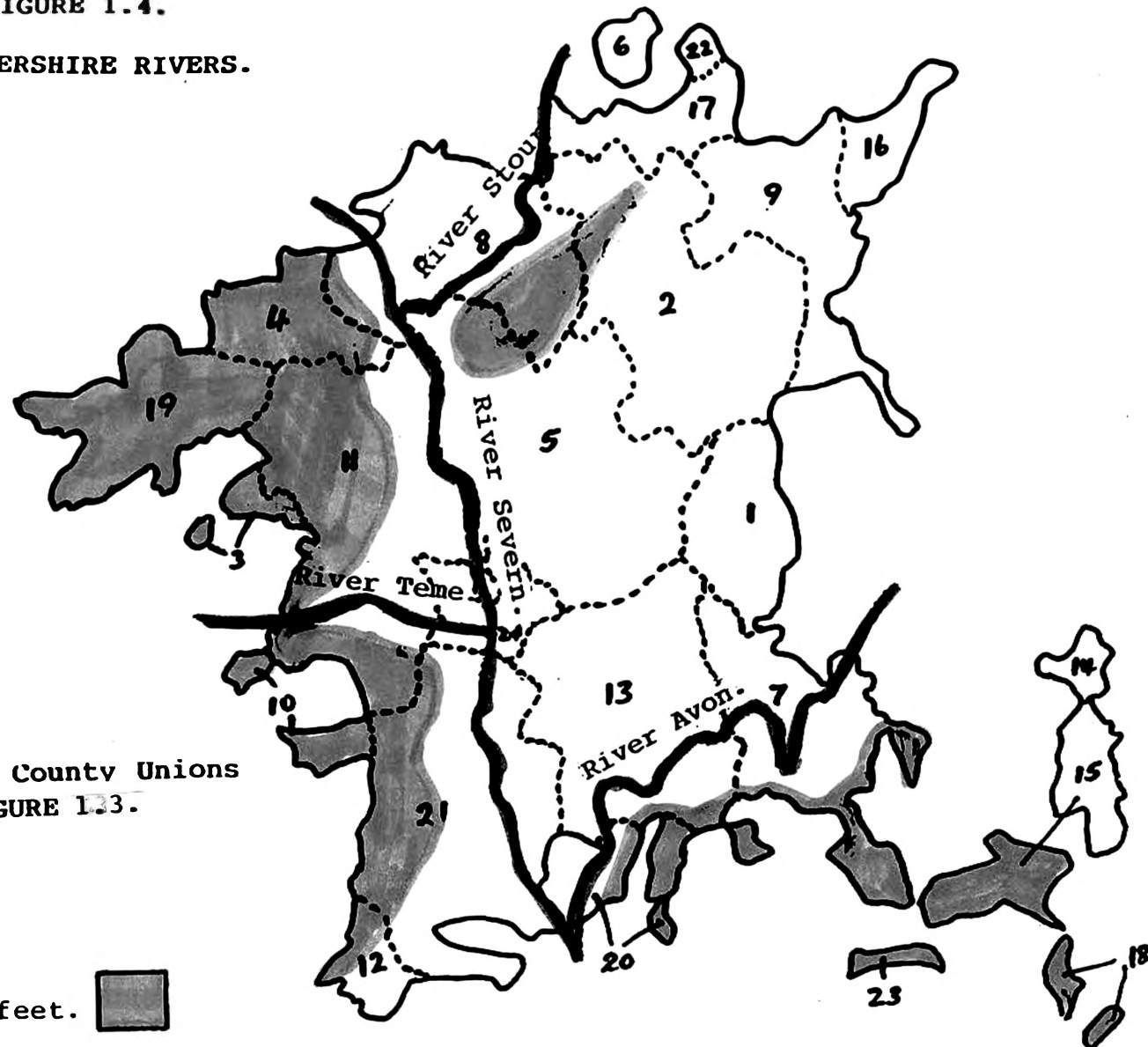
Cutsdean.

24. WORCESTER UNION.

St. John in Bedwardine.  
Worcester.  
St. Martin.

FIGURE 1.4.

WORCESTERSHIRE RIVERS.



Worsted and woollen goods were made from the abundant supply of wool available and at Kidderminster this wool led to the development of the carpet making during the mid-eighteenth century. Carpets were also made at Worcester and at Bewdley, but the industry eventually became established and centralised in and around Kidderminster. Leather was tanned in all parts of the county, although Bewdley became the centre for that trade. At Worcester fine soft leathers were produced for a gloving industry, that had existed there since the fourteenth century, and which by the late eighteenth century was said to employ over 4,000 people in the city.

The county was generally not a source of minerals. Salt had been extracted at Droitwich from Roman times and in the early nineteenth century the town developed as a spa town, when the medicinal properties of its saline springs were discovered. The salt from Droitwich together with good sand deposits at Stourbridge led to the founding of the glass industry in the Stourbridge area and from about 1750 onwards specialist glasses were made. In the early nineteenth century, techniques to toughen glass by an annealing process were developed in the town, and the addition of various mineral salts to the glass led to plate-glass, flint-glass and crown-glass being produced. Technologies were developed to

work these new sorts of glass. The addition of lead oxide to the glass-melt created crystal-glass, and the trade of glass cutting to produce decorative objects was introduced to the area in the early nineteenth century.

The coal necessary for glass production and as a source of power generally was available to the north of Stourbridge. Prior to 1800 coal had also been mined to the south and east of the town, but these measures became exhausted in the late eighteenth century. In the Dudley area the coal seams coincided with iron-ore deposits and iron-smelting became a staple trade in the Black Country based on Dudley, where iron was wrought, moulded and cast into tools. Nailmaking and chainmaking were also common in the Dudley area. Nails were also made in the Bromsgrove area and needles were made at Redditch. These three trades were cottage industries which were late in being fully mechanised and centralised into factories. Canalisation of the rivers Severn and Avon in the mid-eighteenth century, and the building of canals between 1760 and 1830 improved transport of both raw materials and finished products.

Of Worcestershire trades the production of fine-china had no logical basis, as the raw materials for china were not found in the county, and neither was there a trained and skilled workforce available. The Royal

Worcester Porcelain Company was founded by Dr. John Wall in 1750. This was a successful effort to revitalise Worcester's economy. China clay was brought to the city from Cornwall by barge, where the company used local labour trained as china-moulders and painters. Once this skilled workforce had been established, and after new techniques of china decoration were introduced, the trade flourished.

Clearly, Worcestershire's industrial base was not substantial, its major industries being established at Kidderminster, Stourbridge and Dudley. Labour migrated towards these industrial centres in the second half of the eighteenth century and this movement continued into the nineteenth century. Birmingham also began to develop as an industrial centre, and this too acted as a "magnet" for labour from agricultural areas in the county. Only places near to these manufacturing centres became urban and the majority of the county remained rural, some of it very rural. Worcestershire therefore provided a suitable place to investigate Poor Law Administration in a basically rural area, but where comparison with an urban area within the county was possible. This appeared very worthwhile as most common generalisations about the New Poor Law are based on the evidence of urban Poor Law unions.



Nineteenth century population statistics and distribution patterns were useful to demonstrate the contrasting nature of the various areas of the county. Whilst the population of the county as a whole grew by over 130% between 1801 and 1871 (from 146,441 to 338,837) certain places such as Dudley grew very rapidly. In the same period Dudley's population increased by 330% (from 10,107 to 43,791), whilst the population of King's Norton, contiguous with Birmingham, grew by over 670% (from 2,807 to 21,845). In contrast rural places such as Martley in the west of the county grew by only sixty six people (from 1,192 to 1,258). Even more rural places such as Cotheridge, Hanley Child and Great Kyre in the uplands in the west of the county lost population.

In many parts of England and Wales the distress of the poor, from the 1780's, particularly in urban areas, led to civil disturbances that pressed the need for the reform of the Poor Law system. There were disturbances at Stourbridge and Redditch in the early nineteenth century, but these were on a very small scale. Extant copies of local newspapers indicate that there was no organised and substantial demand for Poor Law Reform in the county. After 1834 with the passage of the Poor Law Amendment Act there was no Anti-Poor Law agitation locally, although the county unions did approach the task of Poor Law Administration with varying degrees of

enthusiasm. Dudley Union noticeably was the least enthusiastic of all county unions. The methods, approaches and thinking of the Overseers of the Poor under the Old Poor Law were continued after 1834, although there was a gradual change. It was thus imperative that the Old Poor Law is examined to see the origins of the treatment of children under the New Poor Law. It was suggested by contemporary statistics that over one-third of workhouse inmates were under sixteen years old throughout the period from 1834 to 1871 when the workhouses were administered first by the Poor Law Commission (until 1847) and then by the Poor Law Board. Under sixteen year olds were usually classified as 'children', a large and recognisable group who were uniquely likely to be incarcerated in the workhouse for up to sixteen years. They thus formed an interesting group to investigate because of their continuity of residence in the workhouse, causing them to be profoundly altered by that experience. Whilst adults were voluntarily in the workhouse children had no choice, because if they were dependent on their parents they entered and left the workhouse with them. If their parents were dead, or if the children had been deserted, they were the responsibility of the Board of Guardians. As many as 20% of workhouse inmates were in this category and the Guardians were assiduous in their care of them. Children born in the workhouse, or who were foundlings soon after birth, could spend up to sixteen

years in the workhouse, until they became members of the class of adult paupers, but most Guardians wished to avoid this eventuality. Most children were found employment as soon as possible, usually at the age of ten or eleven years, with Guardians motivated at worst by a desire to rid the poor rates of the burden of unwanted children, and at best by the need to avoid lifelong pauperism. In spite of this some children spent over ten years continuously in the workhouse, which appeared to leave a indelible mark on them. This was seen by some to be an advantage to that person.

There have been studies of the Poor Law in English Counties, together with specific aspects of the Poor Law System, such as the workhouses or the officers who dealt with the paupers, but there have been few large scale local studies of inmate pauper children. There were several relatively small scale studies of workhouse education in the late 1970's and early 1980's.<sup>4</sup> Ross's

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4. For instance:

O'BRIEN, T., "The Education and Care of Workhouse Children in Some Lancashire Poor Law Unions 1834 to 1930", Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Manchester, 1976.

COOKE, F., "The Organisation and Work of the Inspectorate of Workhouse Schools 1846-1904, Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Manchester, 1980.

MCCRORY, P., "Poor Law Education and the Urban Pauper Child: A Study of the Poor Law District School", Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Leicester 1983.

MCKAY, P.W., "Education Under the Poor Law in Gloucestershire 1834-1909", Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Bristol, 1983.

study<sup>5</sup> produced in the 1950's related to the administration of Poor Law children from a national administration standpoint and was a huge undertaking. It was partly replicated and extended in the early 1980's by Obermann<sup>6</sup>, but both of these studies concentrated on Central Administration and used Metropolitan examples when referring to local administration. It is important to recognise the distinction that Ross<sup>7</sup> makes in the conclusion to his thesis, that the nature of the sources used will make a fundamental difference to the findings of any study. He chose to use national Poor Law Papers, which enabled him to examine the nature of developing official Poor Law policy, which he then exemplified from selected Poor Law Guardians' Minute Books. He quite correctly regarded these as biased. This perspective produced a somewhat clinical examination of the Poor Law as seen by an administrator. In this study, of Worcestershire, Boards of Guardians' Minute Books were the major source and these were elucidated, where necessary, from national Poor Law papers, producing a study written with an awareness that the sources were biased. However, for some purposes this bias may be desirable. What emerged was an account of how individual

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5. ROSS, A.M., "The Care and Education of Pauper Children in England and Wales 1834 to 1896", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1955.

6. OBERMANN, S.P., "The Education in Poor Law Institutions in England and Wales During the Period 1834 to 1870", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1982.

7. ROSS, Op cit.

pauper children were treated in workhouses in Worcestershire between 1834 and 1871, which arguably got closer to the reality of their life than do somewhat clinical official accounts provided elsewhere. As this was a major aim of this study, more detail was provided than is usual in such a work, which also attempted to alleviate the south-eastwards official bias of previous work and to provide a useful comparison with part of Digby's<sup>8</sup> study of Norfolk.

There have been a few small-scale studies of the education and treatment of children in the workhouses of one two unions over a period of five or ten years, but no one has examined this aspect of the Poor Law for a whole county for a prolonged period of time. Himmelfarb's book on Poverty<sup>9</sup> and Goffman's classic sociological study of Asylums<sup>10</sup> are used to provide an analytical framework to the study.

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8. DIGBY, A., Pauper Palaces, R.K.P., 1978.

9. HIMMELFARB, G., The Idea of Poverty, Faber, 1984.

10. GOFFMAN, E., Asylums, Penguin, 1970.

## CHAPTER 1.

### CHILDREN AND THE OLD POOR LAW.

Under the New Poor Law the system of administration set up after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 there was a residuum of the thinking of the Old Poor Law still present. The Law was consistent with the new thinking about the problem of the poor as informed by Benthamite utilitarianism. The Central Authority was led by Edwin Chadwick, the first Permanent Secretary to the Poor Law Commission, who was associated with Bentham. He had been Bentham's personal private secretary. The Central authority was assumed to be orthodox in its adherence to the new principles for treating the poor, as were the men appointed to that department who were apparently willing to accept these principles. However, the same was not necessarily true for the local administrators. Guardians were often recruited from amongst existing Overseers of the Poor and many were unconvinced of the need for a new Poor Law. This was particularly true in rural unions and Worcestershire consisted of a majority of such unions. The problems the new legislation were intended to solve were pressures relating to urbanisation, but with the exception of Dudley these pressures were not apparent in the county. Dudley Guardians remained intransigent in their dealings with the Central Administration throughout the period to 1871, preventing effective implementation in the most urban of all the county's unions. To the Guardians of

most rural Worcestershire Unions, however, the New Poor Law must have appeared a costly irrelevance, and in practice attitudes implicit in the accretion of legislation developed over a four hundred and fifty year period remained influential. The same was true for the workhouse officers initially appointed, who had experience under the Old Poor Law. Naturally where a poor house pre-existed the 1834 Poor Law Act, officers who had proved they could cope with running a Poor Law institution were appointed to the new workhouse and the continuing influence of the Old Poor Law was thus inevitable. This was accentuated because the finance of the Poor Law continued to be local, continuing to be financed from locally collected poor rates. Thus implementation of the new Rules and Regulations was tempered by previous experience and previous attitudes towards the poor. For this reason the present study of the operation of the New Poor Law in relation to inmate children, in Worcestershire between 1834 and 1871, begins with a description of the evolution of the Old Poor Law.

Children were implicated, but not mentioned, in the first Poor Law legislation passed in 1350.<sup>1</sup> They were assumed to be the responsibility of their parents, an emphasis that continued into the New Poor Law, after

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1. 25 Edw. III s.2 (1350) reprinted in MYERS, A.R. (ed.) English Historical Documents 1327-45, Vol.IV, 1969, p.993.

1834, and beyond. From its inception the Poor Law was a social control measure in which the behaviour and movements of labouring men was to be controlled by their social superiors, thus ensuring a "united....hostility to the government".<sup>2</sup> This notion continued to influence successive governments as they sought to control the geographical distribution, wealth and behaviour of an increasingly cohesive class of labouring men. Industrialisation, particularly of the metal industries, in the sixteenth century caused stresses in society that the 'Statute of Artificers' passed in 1563<sup>3</sup> sought to alleviate. This Act attempted to control the behaviour of labouring men, but by accident it also controlled their children and adversely influenced their physical condition. It was also the first legislation to control apprenticing. The source of finance for these measures was however unclear until an Act in 1572<sup>4</sup> attempted to make the local community corporately responsible for paying for the Poor Law provision necessary in a vicinity. This Act was not successful, however, because there were no persons within a parish directly responsible for organising such almsgiving. 'Overseers of the Poor', the antecedents of the Poor Law Guardians

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2. McKISACK, M., The Fourteenth Century 1307-99, 1959, pp.335-6.

3. 5 Eliz. I c.4. (1563) Section I. Reprinted in PROTHEROE, G.W. (ed.), Selected Statutes and Other Documents illustrative of the Reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, 1906, p.45.

4. 14 Eliz. I c.5. (1572), PROTHEROE, Op cit, pp.67-72.



after 1834, were to be elected under an Act of 1597.<sup>5</sup> These officials were also to be responsible for the apprenticing of orphaned and destitute children.

By 1600 the Poor Laws, an accretion of over two hundred and fifty years of sporadic legislation, were singularly inappropriate to the new needs that were developing in a rapidly changing society. An Act of 1601<sup>6</sup> attempted to tidy the existing legislation. The changes in English Society continued in the seventeenth century and by 1662<sup>7</sup> destitution was a great problem. To combat this individuals were to be the responsibility of their home parish from birth, unless settlement was altered. Removal to the person's parish of origin, that was used under the New Poor Law after 1834, became legally required in cases of destitution. If a man (or woman) was declared destitute they were removed to their parish of origin, together with any children they may have had. Increasingly such children became burdens on parishes remote from where they were born. It also became the practice to remove abandoned and orphaned children to the parish of settlement of their parent. In this event the apprenticing of pauper children, by the parish, became popular, particularly when it was realised that they became the responsibility

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5. 39 & 40 Eliz. I c.3. (1597-8), PROTHEROE, Op cit. p.101.

6. 43 & 44 Eliz. I c.2. (1601), PROTHEROE, Op cit. p.103.

7. 13 & 14 Car. II c.12. (1662) Reprinted in BROWNING, A. English Historical Documents 1660-1714, 1953, p.464.

of the parish where they became craftsmen. An Act of parliament in 1698<sup>8</sup> re-emphasised this. In spite of an implicit assumption that parishes would provide a workhouse for the destitute this was rarely done. An Act in 1722<sup>9</sup> unsuccessfully attempted to encourage the provision of such facilities. In Worcestershire, only four out of over three-hundred parishes provided a workhouse, and ironically by the beginning of the nineteenth century these were in the least appropriate places. They were provided in rural parishes, such as Ombersley and Chaddesley Corbett, not in the burgeoning industrialised urban parishes of the Black Country and near to Birmingham.

The Industrial revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and concomitant urbanisation caused new stresses in existing social organisations. Traditional relationships between masters and servants changed as a "new middle class" was created,<sup>10</sup> while new forms of financing made employers more remote from their employees. This radically altered traditional relationships. Workers were free to migrate in spite of

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8. 9 Will. III c.30. (1697-8) Reprinted in BROWNING, Op. cit.

9. 9 Geo. I, c.7. (1722) Reprinted in HORN, D.B. and RANSOME, N. (eds), English Historical Documents 1714-83, Vol.X, 1957, pp.283-5.

10. Sometimes a class of managers who came between employers and employees altering the relationships of these two groups. Face to face relationships between employers and employees became difficult.

the restraints of the "Act of Settlement" which came to be ignored as increasingly workers were needed in industrial towns. Urban places increased in size by "stepwise migration" (a concept first suggested by Redford,<sup>11</sup> and developed by Pryce<sup>12</sup>). Villages surrounding the towns grew, whilst small hamlets in outlying rural areas began to depopulate<sup>13</sup> as indicated by the censuses from 1801 onwards. Virtually no area of England remained unaffected. The Old Poor Law proved inappropriate to these new demands. For instance traditional child rearing practices involving the "extended family"<sup>14</sup> had operated in rural areas, but migration to towns and cities caused extended families to disintegrate (although they may have reformed within two generations). Urban child neglect became a problem. Children were abandoned in urban areas and were to be found in workhouses ill equipped to cope with this problem, where these existed. Hanway's Act of 1762<sup>15</sup> was intended to solve this problem in London by creating "a number of boarding establishments in the suburbs to

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11. REDFORD, A. Labour Migration in England 1800 to 1850, 1964.

12. PRYCE, W.T.R. Cited in ANDERSON, M. Urban Migration in Nineteenth Century Lancashire, 1974.

13. Small hamlets like Eastham, Rochford and Great Witley in the extreme west of the county depopulated by about 10% between 1801 and 1831. Source: 1851 Census Report, I.U.P. Population Vol.7.

14. In an extended family several generations live together in the same geographical locality and are able to provide mutual support. This support may be financial or practical. For instance older relatives could be relied to look after children whilst their parents worked in agriculture.

15. 2 Geo. III. c.39. (1762)

which they relegated the younger children whom they were not legally permitted to keep in the workhouse". Elsewhere children remained in the workhouses. When children from the Metropolis were moved to these Boarding Houses they were thought to need a task to occupy them and educating them was one obvious solution. The Act of 1767<sup>16</sup> made it possible for schools to be established in Metropolitan workhouses to be available to all pauper children within a fifteen mile radius of that school.

Hanway wrote in 1766, "Many of the children instead of being nourished with care, by the fostering hand or breast of a wholesome country nurse, are thrust into the impure air of the workhouse, into the hands of some careless worthless young female, or decrepit old woman".<sup>17</sup> He used mortality statistics that showed infant deaths to be at a higher rate in workhouses than elsewhere. For instance he stated; that mortality in children aged under two years in the workhouses of the Metropolis between 1756-8 was 46.9% and of 43,101 infants in the workhouse 20,232 died before they were two

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16. 7 Geo. III. c.39. (1767)

17. HANWAY, Jonas. An Earnest Appeal for Mercy to the Children of the Poor, 1766. [Hanway (1712-86) was born in Portsmouth and sent to school in London. He was apprenticed to a merchant in Lisbon and he became a merchant in St Petersburg. He became Governor of the Foundlings' Hospital in 1758 where he worked ceaselessly for poor children.]

years old. The Master of a workhouse of a large parish, who was challenged for forcing a child from the breast of the mother and sending it to a foundling hospital alleged in his defence; "we send all our children to the foundling hospital, we have not saved one alive for the last fourteen years. We have no fit place to preserve them in; the air is too confined". He went on; "Of the same nature was another parish, some years before the foundling hospital opened, where it appeared, that of 54 children born in or taken into their workhouse, not one outlived the year in which it was born or taken in". Dislike of the workhouse persisted and using such propaganda Hanway was successful in promoting two Bills which became the Acts of 1762<sup>18</sup> and 1767.<sup>19</sup> These attempted to remove the infants of the Metropolis from apparently lethal conditions.

By the 1780's the insatiable demand for labour created by industrial change was reduced and the problems of the Poor Laws were radically altered. Adult unemployment led large numbers of able-bodied adults to apply for relief in unparalleled numbers, but the Act of 1723<sup>20</sup> proved inappropriate. It had banned outdoor relief, assuming

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18. 2 Geo. III. c.22. (1762)

19. 7 Geo III. c.39. (1767)

20. 9 Geo. I. c.7. (1723) HORNE & RANSOME, Op. cit.

unrealistically that workhouse accommodation was adequate. In contemporary Worcestershire some workhouse accommodation proved totally inadequate and the few workhouses that existed were often inappropriately situated. They had been built to accommodate the poor of the county in Tudor times and the distribution of population had radically altered. The Act of 1782<sup>21</sup> usually known as Gilbert's Act was intended to alleviate this situation by encouraging the building of new workhouses and ensuring that they were used. It was stated that if paupers refused to work the Justices; "on conviction shall punish such offenders by committing....[them]....to the House of Correction for refusing to work" where they were sentenced to hard labour for between one and three months. The existing workhouses needed overhaul if such paupers were to be compelled to work. Overseers quite frequently misapplied money raised for relief, but correctly applied this money would have built, purchased or rented sufficient workhouses. A Board of Guardians was to be appointed in each locality to set up and administer workhouses replacing the Overseers of the Poor. It was hoped that Poor Relief would be uniform, but the legislation was only permissive. It was suggested that admissions and discharges would be registered to regulate the pauper problem by maximising the effect of

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21. 22 Geo. III. c.83. (1782)

institutionalisation and a strict workhouse regime was to enhance the depersonalising effect of registration. Thus; "no person shall be sent to such poor house or houses, except such as are become indigent by age, sickness, or infirmities, and are unable to obtain maintenance by their labours; and except such orphan children...[and]...such children as shall necessarily go their with their mother thither their sustenance." The workhouse was considered inappropriate to the needs of the unaccompanied child. The Act further stated; "infant children of tender age....may either be sent to such poorhouse....or placed by the Guardians of the Poor....with some reputable persons in or near the parish....until such child....be of sufficient age to be put out to service, or bound apprentice", thus the influence of the child's natural mother would be ameliorated. Fostering of children became common in some areas, but not in Worcestershire, and it was stated that "any person able and willing to work, but who cannot get employment [was]....to be properly maintained lodged and provided for until such employment shall be provided"; giving the union responsibility for the providing work. This Act remained voluntary and only Kidderminster, Pershore, Worcester and Upton-on-Severn provided workhouses. Other places ignored this permissive Act. Worcester Union created a "House of Industry" under the

Act of 1782.<sup>22</sup> In the other parishes (Kidderminster, Pershore and Upton-on-Severn) poorhouses had been set up under the Elizabethan Poor Laws and these were adapted to meet the new demands. Other areas of the county did not build workhouses as most parishes continued to rely on the provision of outdoor relief to cope with their pauper problem. Whilst some places had problems with indigent paupers they could not afford to finance huge institutions to cope with the problem and they did not have a local administration for such an institutions. Thus Nicholls alluded to these problems when he referred to; "New returns of parochial expenditure, which revealed the widening range of Poor Law Administrators, with the increase in population, and with the steady growth of the burden".<sup>23</sup> The problem of pauperism remained great and it increased in spite of the provisions of Gilbert's Act of 1782.<sup>24</sup> Further attempts to provide finance to build workhouses in 1783<sup>25</sup> failed and a further Act of 1786<sup>26</sup> again legalised Outdoor Relief, where workhouses existed, because the urban workhouses were so overcrowded. Where local Guardians demanded individuals seeking relief should enter the workhouse local justices could overrule them, although they seldom did. The dominant philosophy of the upper-

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22. Ibid. 22 Geo. III. c.83. (1782)

23. NICHOLS, Sir. G., History of the English Poor Law, 1854. p. 99.

24. 22 Geo. III. c.83. (1782)

25. 23 Geo. III. c.56. (1783)

26. 26 Geo. III. c.58. (1786)



middle and upper classes was exhibited by the Reverend Joseph Townsend who wrote in 1785 "The wisest legislator will never be able to devise a more equitable, or in any respect a more suitable punishment, than hunger is for a disobedient servant. Hunger will tame the fiercest animals, it will teach decency and courtesy, obedience and subjection to the most brutish the most obstinate the most perverse".<sup>27</sup> This sort of view emanated from the economics of Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations (1776). The philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, usually called "Utilitarianism", had a profound effect on the management of the poor, and his work Pauper Management Improved (1785) was particularly influential, suggesting the abolition of the existing Poor Laws which would be replaced by a profit making company to provide accommodation for paupers and others deemed to be a menace to society, but who had not broken the law. Malthus's ideas were also invoked in support of this. He believed that no matter how much money was given to the poor if there was no increase in the quantity of meat available the price would rise and a rise in population would accentuate this problem. In real terms the poor would thus be no better off. Thus, "An increase of population without a proportional increase of food will evidently have the same effect in lowering the value of

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27. TOWNSEND, Rev. J., "Dissertation on the Poor Laws", 1785. Cited by Webb, S & B. English Poor Law History, Part II. Vol. I. Longman Green, 1929, pp.11-12.

each man's patent. The food must necessarily be distributed in smaller quantities, and consequently a day's labour will purchase a smaller quantity of provisions".<sup>28</sup> Thus the Poor Laws were thought to increase population unnecessarily, by giving security to the paupers, but without increasing the food supply. Most importantly, "the quantity of food consumed in the workhouse upon that part of society that cannot be considered the most valuable part, diminished the share that would otherwise belong to the most industrious, and more worthy members". Such opinions led to the belief that this was to be feared. The Poor Laws were said to "have alleviated little of the intensity of individual misfortune, they have spread the general evil over a much greater surface". The aim of the amendments and reforms of 1834 was to make the workhouse as unpleasant as possible, which led in turn to the forming of an "Anti-Poor Law Movement".<sup>29</sup> Country parishes were concerned about former inhabitants, who applied for parish relief anywhere in England or Wales, as they were automatically removed to their parish of origin. It was thought that the young and active, including fecund women, migrated leaving an ageing poor population in the countryside. Agricultural methods altered and rural

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28. MALTHUS, Thomas, First Essay on Population, First published 1798. Republished by Penguin, 1970. p. 97.

29. EDSALL, N.C. The Anti-Poor Law Movement, Manchester University Press, 1971.

parishes became less able to finance Poor Law provisions and individuals removed to them placed an unreasonable burden on the parish. This was enhanced because Guardians in industrial towns tended to remove individuals back to their parish of origin as soon as possible. The Act of 1795<sup>30</sup> attempted to control this. It refused removal until the pauper was chargeable - that was actually in receipt of relief. It had also become usual for pregnant women to be removed to their parish of origin to be cared for by their families, although many such women had no family remaining there. In the case of unmarried pregnant women this notion was extended in the belief that they would be shamed by being returned. They too were often unknown in their parish of birth from which they had migrated years before. This compounded the pauper problem in some rural places. Other solutions were tried under various Acts of Parliament in the early nineteenth century, often by attempting to amend previous legislation. Under an Act of 1809<sup>31</sup> it was made illegal to remove individuals to the parish of origin if they were ill, a measure designed to prevent seriously ill people being transported around the country. In the same year a further Act<sup>32</sup> attempted to shame the mother of an illegitimate child by sending her to the "House

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30. 35 Geo. III. c.101. (1795)

31. 49 Geo. III. c.124. (1809)

32. 50 Geo. III. c.51. (1810)

of Correction" whilst her child was cared for in the workhouse. The Old Poor Law was relatively undocumented and the havoc created in the workhouses by unattended pauper babies must have been great.

The return of paupers to their parish of origin must have become increasingly difficult, for the Sturges-Bourne Act of 1818<sup>33</sup> amended the "Act of Settlement"<sup>34</sup> so that outdoor relief became available in the parish where the person lived as opposed to the parish of origin. In "sudden and urgent necessity" the Act further required "adequate relief" to be given, meeting the immediate needs of the individual. Another Act of 1819<sup>35</sup> aimed to reclaim relief paid from the individuals' wages when they found employment, although this was difficult if not impossible. Yet a further Act in 1820<sup>36</sup> attempted to amend the "Law of Settlement" because Sturges-Bourne's measure had proved unworkable.

Residence for one year became a prerequisite before relief could be claimed from the parish and the poet

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33. 58 Geo. III. c.69. (1818) [Sturges-Bourne, William, 1769 to 1845. Educated at Winchester and Christ Church Oxford. M.A. (1793) and D.C.L. (1831). He was M.P. for Hornsea 1798 to 1831. Senior Secretary to the Treasury 1804-6, Lord of Treasury 1807-9, Home Secretary 1827, Commissioner for Woods and Forests 1827, Lord Warden of the New Forest 1828-31. P.C. 1814. He also sponsored 59 Geo. III. c.18. (1819) Op cit.]

34. 13 & 14 Car. II. c.12. (1662) BROWNING, Op cit.

35. 59 Geo. III. c.18 (1819).

36. 60 Geo. III & Geo. IV. c.5. (1820)

Crabbe noted the overseer's perplexity;<sup>37</sup>

"There is a doubtful pauper and we think,  
'Tis not with us to give him meat and drink;  
A child is born and 'tis not mighty clear,  
whether the mother lived with us a year".

These problems were further compounded by a transient workforce of "men on the tramp", who simply slept rough or took to what the Webbs referred to in the early twentieth century as social parasitism,<sup>38</sup> using the workhouse as a convenient lodging house. The Act of 1824<sup>39</sup> attempted to regulate this by making conditions most unpleasant of all for transient inmates, who continued to be kept in conditions of "Less Eligibility". This "Vagrancy Act" failed in its purpose as the whole problem increased rather than decreased.

As more children and young people became inmates of workhouses problems also increased. Thus William Hale writing in 1800 stated; "I was at our workhouse near the whole of yesterday. The number of the paupers in the house was four hundred and twelve. It be considerably more than full. We were obliged to put them three in a bed, and in some cases four to a bed".<sup>40</sup> As this overcrowding was typical of many workhouses the idea of ridding the parish of children as early as possible proved attractive. From Tudor times onwards some parishes had apprenticed poor children as young as seven years old. The Industrial

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37. CRABBE, G. Quoted by WEBB. English Poor Law History, Part. II. Vol. I., Longman Green, 1929, p. 419.

38. WEBB, S. & B. English Poor Law Policy, Cass, 1910. p.34.

39. 5 Geo. IV. c.83. (1824)

40. HALE, William. Letter to Patrick Colquhoun, 21st. October 1800.

Revolution made apprenticing more common, but as the market for apprentices locally was small, apprenticeships away from the parish developed. Thus, in the early nineteenth century there was apprenticeship of poor children from London to the cotton mills of Lancashire. Birmingham often apprenticed pauper children to the merchant marine, where there was apparently a constant demand for such apprentices, whilst the rural parishes in Worcestershire apprenticed to carpet weavers in Kidderminster. At first this apprenticing was uncontrolled, until the 1802 Act<sup>41</sup> sought to regulate the treatment of pauper apprentices in the cotton industry. It was stated "it hath of late become the practice in cotton and wool mills, and....factories to employ a great number of male and female apprentices....certain regulations are becoming necessary to preserve the health and morals of such apprentices and other persons". This Act proved wholly ineffective and thus attempts were made to tackle the problems of apprenticeship piecemeal. As iniquities in the treatment of children in the cotton and wool industries were greatest, the problems of the textile industries were tackled first, but the regulations about hours of work, living conditions and the clothing to be supplied to apprentices were never implemented, because of the absence of an effective Factory Inspectorate.

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41. 42 Geo. III. c.46. (1802)

Whilst education clauses in the Act specified half-time education and "instruction in the usual hours of work in reading, writing and arithmetic" together with "at least one hour every Sunday in the principles of the Christian Religion" these regulations were seldom implemented and never enforced.

The evidence of John Moss, master of the Preston Workhouse, to the 'Select Committee on the State of Children Employed in Manufacturies' of 1816<sup>42</sup> gave some indication of such problems. He had been employed as Master of the Apprentices' House at Backbarrow Mill, Cartmel, Lancashire. This mill employed mainly apprentices from London, particularly from the parishes of Whitechapel, St James's and St Clement's, together with a few from Liverpool. He stated that children from London "were from seven to eleven, and those from Liverpool from eight or ten to fifteen", in direct contravention of the 1802 Act.<sup>43</sup> Moss asserted, however, that he was unaware that there was such an Act. Parish Officers were supposed to visit the apprentices to ensure that they were properly treated, yet the apprentices from London were never visited, whilst those

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42. "Select Committee on the State of Children Employed in Manufacturies", 1816. Irish Universities Press, 1972. Childrens' Employment, Vol.1 pp. 178-185. PP. 1816. (397) III.

43. 42 Geo. III. c.46. (1802)

from Liverpool received some visits. Complaints made by Liverpool Officials on their visits, about the dirty condition of the apprentices' bedding, led to some improvement, because as Moss said, the apprentices had an annual fee paid (to the mill owner) from their home parish, which gave the parish officials power to inspect and this improved the conditions under which apprentices were kept. When this fee was not paid, however, "the children were turned out on the high road to beg their way to their former parishes....they were taken from the mill in a cart and then turned adrift near the sands on the Lancaster Road". Some of these were taken in by another factory, whilst others found their way to Lancaster Workhouse where the Guardians demanded the boys be taken back to Backbarrow. When returned they were forced to accept an additional six weeks term of apprenticeship; "on account of running away". Apprentices out of their period of indenture were often considered unfit for future employment and were dismissed, so that many gained nothing from their experience, with "parish apprenticeship" appearing to be a subterfuge for cheap or nearly free labour. Apprenticing was attractive to parishes burdened with pauper children, because at the end of the apprenticeship the individuals 'settlement' was moved to where they had attained craftsman status.

The aftercare of pauper apprentices was a perpetual



problem for abuses were common. Positions with local apprentice masters were difficult to obtain and apprentices were sent further afield thereby increasing the supervision problem. Abuses were most persistent and worrying amongst apprentices in the cotton industry in spite of the legislation of 1802,<sup>44</sup> but they occurred in other textile industries such as the wool and silk industries. A further Act of 1819<sup>45</sup> reaffirmed "no child shall be employed in any description of work....until he or she shall have attained the full age of nine years" and generally Boards of Guardians did not apprentice children before this age in line with this legislation. Prior to this, children as young as seven years old had been apprenticed. They also attempted to regulate hours of work for child apprentices. The Act was not effective, however, as there was no enforcement agency to ensure proper implementation. Another Act of 1820<sup>46</sup> related to the cotton industry was also largely ignored. As the cotton industry in Lancashire, the largest employer of pauper apprentices, could not be regulated there were likely to be problems in other industries where apprentices were more dispersed, fewer in number, and where the problems of inspection were insuperable.

By 1831 the control of apprenticeship needed complete revision and a Factory Act was passed to do

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44. 42 Geo. III. c.46. (1802)

45. 59 Geo. III. c.18. (1819) Op cit.

46. 60 Geo. III and Geo. IV. c.5 (1820).

this.<sup>47</sup> It repealed the Acts of 1818, 1819, 1825 and 1829 and stated that "certain regulations have become necessary to preserve the health and morals of such people". It again referred particularly to young persons of both sexes employed in the cotton mills. Night work which was considered morally damaging was outlawed for those under twenty one years of age while a twelve hour day was made the maximum for those under 18 years old. The minimum age for apprenticeship was reaffirmed at nine years. Factory owners were now made responsible for ensuring that no one under that age was employed, although they could claim in their defence that parents had certified the child old enough. As parents doing this were eager to obtain work for their child many falsely certified their children were above nine years old and this went unchecked because of a lack of inspection. Factory Inspection was instituted by another Act in 1833<sup>48</sup> and two paid Factory Inspectors were appointed "to examine therein the children and any other persons employed therein, and make enquiries respecting the condition employment and education". They were also "authorised and required to enforce attendance at school and factory". Such legislation at last materially affected the condition of pauper apprentices. The Act stated "it should be regulated....due regard being had

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47. 1 & 2 Will. IV. c.39. (1831)

48. 3 and 4 Will. IV. c.103. (1833)

to their health and education", but the Act specifically excluded certain processes such as "fulling, roughing and boiling" because these were continuous processes in which children needed to be continually employed. These processes were excluded from night work regulations. Children under nine years old could be employed in silk manufacture because their nimble fingers were considered essential for the work. One novel innovation in the 1833 Act was the requirement for a Certificate "that such child....be of ordinary strength and appearance at the age of nine years....the child to personally appear before some surgeon or physician....and shall submit itself to his examination" before the child could be employed.

The New Poor Law after 1834 was intended to be a new beginning, representing a thoroughly modern approach and one based on an ideology containing elements from Adam Smith's economic theories, Malthus's population theories and Bentham's utilitarianism. The initial influence of Chadwick to oversee the new system and the influence of the utilitarians combined to ensure the orthodoxy of the early servants of the Central Poor Law Administration. However to suggest that this orthodoxy pervaded the whole Poor Law administration after 1834 would be misleading. Realistically the Old Poor Law, that accretion of laws relating to the poor that had

developed from the 1350's, still had influence. The post-1834 Poor Law system may have been new, but old premises overseen by a Board of Guardians, the successors of the Overseers of the Poor under the Old Poor Law, who were in many cases the same individuals as these overseers, remained. The workhouse staff appointed were also the same people employed in the poor houses, before 1834, because they had proven ability to cope with the considerable problems of the day-to-day care of pauper inmates. The rules for running a workhouse and a Poor Law Union may have been developed in the totally orthodox atmosphere of Somerset House, the offices of the Poor Law Commission in London, but they were interpreted locally by Guardians and officials steeped in the traditions of the Old Poor Law. When these considerations were added to the inappropriateness of the New Poor Law to the rural places of Worcestershire, and to the realisation that the Poor Law was financed locally from the poor rates, the influence of the Old Poor Law was obviously going to continue. It gradually diminished as the influence of older Guardians disappeared and union officials were replaced, retired, or died. An understanding of what the Old Poor Law was and how it had developed is thus essential to understanding how the New Poor Law was implemented. Under the Old Poor Law children were seldom mentioned because it was assumed that "they went with their

parents". There was, however, mention of apprenticeships to enable the parishes to rid themselves of destitute, orphaned and neglected children who would otherwise have been a burden on the Poor Rates of the parish. Under the Old Poor Law these individuals were apprenticed, but after the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act such apprenticing was discouraged. It was reinstated after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1844.<sup>49</sup> Children who were pauper apprentices in the under the Old Poor Law, between 1780 and 1834, were arguably similar to inmate children in the workhouses, under the New Poor Law, after 1834. The remainder of this study investigates the treatment of these youthful indoor paupers under the New Poor Law.

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49. 7 and 8 Vict. c.101.

## CHAPTER 2.

### APPRENTICESHIP UNDER THE OLD POOR LAW.

Of the methods available for dealing with pauper children under the Old Poor Law only the parish apprenticeship system was useful in resolving the problems of a rural area such as Worcestershire. Workhouses were rare in the County prior to 1834, and where they existed they were considered inappropriate places for children. The home, with the pauper parents on outdoor relief, was also considered inappropriate. The low density of population in Worcestershire meant that Childrens' Establishments were, and remained, inappropriate and parish apprenticeship was used as a solution to the problem.

The parish apprenticeship has received relatively scant detailed treatment in published works on the Old Poor Law, and unpublished theses also neglect it. The reason is, apparently, because the evidence is disparate and is difficult to analyse. For instance as Oxley has indicated,<sup>1</sup> it was impossible to assess the intentions of Overseers in apprenticing pauper children. In this chapter an effort is made to use quantitative methods to investigate parish apprenticeships in Worcestershire in the period 1781 to 1834. This period has been chosen to give a basis for comparison of the treatment of pauper children in the area after the Poor Law Amendment Act of

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1. OXLEY, Geoffrey, Poor Relief in England and Wales 1601-1834, David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1974, p.76.

1834. It was this same sort of child who was liable to be found in the workhouses after the Act. From the evidence available it appears that the abandonment of parish apprenticeships under the New Poor Law left a large population of pauper children to be catered for in some other way. It was the treatment of these children after 1834 that provides the substance for the rest of this study.

The pauper child was a cause for concern in Worcestershire, as elsewhere, prior to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, but there could be no unified action on the problem as there was no central administration for the Poor Law. Poor Law measures were the responsibility of the Home Department, who seldom communicated with the parish authorities about such measures. Although an Act of Parliament had been passed in 1782,<sup>2</sup> which had allowed unions of parishes to finance the building of workhouses, few areas availed themselves of the opportunity. In Worcestershire no new workhouses were built. There existed only poor-houses established under the Elizabethan Poor Law. These remained in use, and children accompanied their parents into them. Deserted or orphan children were also accommodated. By the last quarter of the eighteenth

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2. 22 Geo. III c.83.

century there was a growing belief in the endemic and contagious nature of mendicancy and this belief made the workhouse even less acceptable as a means of dealing with pauper children. Contact with afflicted adults was not considered advisable as a means of 'treating' the pauper child. The acceptance of the disease like nature of pauperism was also to lead to the questioning of the advisability of allowing the children of afflicted families to remain in their homes. It was argued that the nature and the state of the parents who were forced to accept outdoor relief made them unsuitable parents to care for children. In these circumstances removal of the child from its home was seen as desirable. In the Metropolis, and some densely populated urban areas, children's establishments were practicable. These institutions were permitted, if not encouraged, by Hanway's Act of 1767.<sup>3</sup> By the early nineteenth century most metropolitan parishes had separate children's establishments, but such schemes were impossible in the rural areas of Worcestershire. There were too few children to make these systems worthwhile.

The cost of paying for the upkeep of pauper children placed a great strain on the poor rates and when this pressure was added to the belief that workhouses created pauperism in the young the attractions of apprenticeship

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3. 7 Geo. III. c.39.



were obvious. The Parish Apprentices Act of 1698<sup>4</sup> came to be used as a means of ridding the parishes of the burden of unwanted children. Under the act children could be apprenticed at 7 years of age. Children younger than this were to be left with their parents. By the 1780's there had evolved three distinct types of parish apprenticeship:

A. The binding of individual children to a master in consideration of a fee. The premium was paid by the overseers of the poor of the parish of origin of the child.

B. The allotment of pauper children to the ratepayers of the parish. These ratepayers, selected in rotation, were compelled to take such children, and failure to accept children, when allotted, led to a fine.

C. The binding of batches of children to manufacturers to work in their factories.

In relation to batch apprenticing, the Webbs asserted that in 1833, "Changes in the distribution of the textile manufactures, and in the character of the machinery, together with increasing legal restrictions, had practically killed out (except in a few districts such as Worcestershire and Staffordshire) the device of wholesale apprenticing of pauper children to capitalist

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4. 9 & 10 Will. III c.14.

manufacturers".<sup>5</sup> They cited the evidence of Charles Pelham Villiers<sup>6</sup> as proof of this. In his evidence to the Poor Law Inquiry Commission of 1833, he referred to the West Midlands Counties not just to Worcestershire and Staffordshire, and the evidence on which the Webbs based their statement was; "The system compelling the ratepayers to receive apprentices according to the amount of their assessment has generally been discontinued, owing to the opportunity which manufacturers offer in the county for early employment, and the dislike of the ratepayers themselves of the practice".<sup>7</sup> Nowhere in this statement could the Webbs have found proof of their assertion about Worcestershire and Staffordshire. The statement about 'batch apprenticing' was also doubtful. It appeared that the Webbs thought that as Kidderminster had a thriving carpet industry, Stoke on Trent a pottery industry, and the Black Country a multitude of different industries, there must have been a large market for child labour, and 'batch apprenticing' would therefore be possible. The Webbs inferred that Villiers' comments referred only to these two counties. A thorough search of the available material on apprenticeships in Worcestershire revealed no evidence of 'batch apprenticing' from Worcestershire parishes, and a

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5. WEBB, S. & B., English Poor Law History - Part I, Longman Green, 1929, p.210.

6. Evidence of C.P. Villiers to the Poor Law Inquiry Commissioners, Appendix A, p.8.

7. Villiers Report, *ibid*, p.8.

'batch apprenticing' from Worcestershire parishes, and a search of carpet industry records indicated no evidence of the practice in Kidderminster or in the Severn Valley to the north of the town.<sup>8</sup> The statement by Villiers also seemed questionable on the basis of extant evidence. "Allotment Apprenticing" or more properly a form of "boarding out" children appeared to be practised in the early nineteenth century. Allotting apprentices to a poor ratepayer was not an apprenticeship, as to be apprenticed presumed that the child learned a skill, arguably 'allotted apprentices' learned no skill.

The most often cited example of 'batch apprenticing' referred to the textile industry in the north of England. Worcestershire had a textile industry, the carpet industry, but it operated as a cottage industry. The area of Worcestershire from Kidderminster up the Severn Valley as far as Bridgnorth in Shropshire contained cottage based handlooms for the weaving of carpets. These carpet weavers certainly took apprentices, and some were parish apprentices, but the numbers involved hardly warranted the description 'mass apprenticing'. The product of these cottage manufacturies was marketed through carpet proprietors, such as Henry Brinton, operating from Kidderminster. It

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8. In villages in the Severn Valley to the North West of Kidderminster such as Arley, Hampton and Highley.

Kidderminster in 1821, and other carpet proprietors followed suit. The industry gradually became more centralised and based on Kidderminster, but even after this change of organisation with the enlargement of scale that occurred the carpet industry was never a wholesale employer of parish apprentices. The Black Country was partly in Worcestershire. Dudley was a detached part of the county - an enclave within Staffordshire. Dudley was renowned for its small workshops making metal goods and these industries were essentially small scale. Although apprentices were bound by county parishes to Black Country manufacturers the numbers were again not sufficient to be termed 'wholesale apprenticing'. There existed in Worcestershire no industry using large scale modes of production as there was thus no local market for "batch apprenticing" and there were insufficient numbers of children to sustain such a system. The Webbs cite Villiers evidence,<sup>9</sup> this time referring to Kidderminster. Villiers stated, "One fifth of the inhabitants, were said, during my visit, to be non-parishioners, but who would soon acquire settlement". This statement was used together with the evidence of an unnamed bookseller from Tewkesbury who referred to the "frameknitting trade" at some unidentified date in the past, to suggest vast apprenticing of pauper children

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9. WEBB, S. & B., English Poor Law History, Op cit, p.203.

into the carpet industry at Kidderminster, but the Webbs had no way of checking Villiers' assertions. The 1821 Census contained no details of trades and professions, or details of parish of origin and therefore could not have been used. Villiers did not state what he meant by "non parishioners". It remains uncertain whether he meant a person born outside the parish or one who had not obtained settlement in the parish. A person born in a parish had an automatic right of settlement, whilst outsiders could only alter their parish of settlement if they bought property within the new parish. Even this did not prevent attempts, some of them successful, to remove individuals applying for poor relief to their parish of origin, or sometimes to the parish of origin of their father. It therefore appeared worthwhile to examine the evidence for Kidderminster of the first census specifying "where born". The 1851 Census was used, and a sample of 10% of the entries was taken. It revealed that 58.1% of the sample had been born outside Kidderminster, which had grown dramatically in the period from 1801 to 1831. Its population doubled in size. Between 1831 and 1841 the population of the town fell in number, but there was an increase between 1841 and 1851.<sup>10</sup> Clearly a natural increase could not have

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10. The population of Kidderminster Borough was:

DATE.	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851
MALES.	3,020.	3,848.	5,280.	7,433.	7,156.	8,517.
FEMALES.	3,090.	4,190.	5,429.	7,548.	7,243.	8,516.
TOTAL.	6,110.	8,038.	10,709.	14,981.	14,399.	17,023.

Source: The 1851 Census. PP. [1631] LXXXIX, IUP  
Population Vol 6.

sustained the high level of growth in the early nineteenth century and there was substantial immigration into the town during that period. The 1851 Census did not indicate settlement, it indicated place of birth, and the sample chosen included individuals born after 1834, but doubt must be expressed about Villier's estimate of 20% non parishioners. It appears that the figure cited by Villiers was an under estimate.

Elsewhere in evidence to the Poor Law Inquiry in 1833, J. Gough Jnr. High Bailiff of Kidderminster asserted that girls were never apprenticed in the carpet industry. This statement must also be questioned as there were two examples of girls apprenticed to carpet weavers. The numbers were small compared with boys apprenticed to the trade. A survey of carpet workers aged twenty five years old in 1851, at the time of the Census, who would have been over seven years of age in 1834 and liable for apprenticing, revealed the results presented as Table 2.1.

The percentage of persons born outside Kidderminster from this survey was 58.5%, and this accorded well with the estimate taken from the sample of the whole population on the 1851 Census. (58.1%) Further estimates demonstrated that of the 1,834 'natives' of Kidderminster, 66.6% were employed in the carpet industry. This was in stark contrast to the 'non

TABLE 2.1.

Males Over the Age of 25 Years by Place of Birth and Occupation.

	Place of Birth.			%age Inhabitants.			%age Workforce.		
	K'M	Other	Tot	K'M	Other	Tot	K'M	Other	Tot
Carpet Industry	1,222	508	1,730	66.6	19.7	39.8	70.6	29.4	100.0
Other Trades.	612	2,078	2,690	33.4	80.3	61.1	23.0	77.0	100.0
TOTAL.	1,834	2,586	4,420	100.0	100.0	100.0	41.5	58.5	100.0

SOURCE: 1851 Census. P.P. [1631]LXXXV. I.U.P. Population  
Vol. 7. Entries for Kidderminster.

natives' of Kidderminster. Of these 2,586 individuals only 19.7% were employed in the carpet industry. Of the five hundred and eight individuals born outside Kidderminster who were employed in the carpet industry over one hundred were born in Wilton in Wiltshire where carpet mills had been established in the 1780's. Noticeably, the youngest of these individuals were in their late forties at the time of the 1851 Census, and the suggestion is reasonably made that these men were imported as technicians when Kidderminster established its carpet mills in the 1820's. Their previous experience was utilised. Of the other four hundred carpet industry employees, from outside Kidderminster, there was no apparent pattern in their places of birth. If, as the Webbs suggested, batches of apprentices had been sent to Kidderminster from the

Gloucester area it would have been expected, less than twenty years later, that a group of Kidderminster inhabitants born in the Gloucester area would exist. This group did not exist.

The alternative might have been that there were two types of apprentice, 'craft apprentices', who received training that enabled them to become the next generation of craftsmen, and 'parish apprentices' who did not receive such training. Parish apprentices appear to have been employed as "drawers" setting up the frames on which carpets were woven. This was an occupation for girls and young boys with nimble fingers. Such children were not classed as carpet weavers, and they were dismissed when their fingers became too plump to continue work as drawboys and drawgirls. They then probably found alternative employment. Some probably left the Kidderminster area, but those who remained were not recognisable from the Census entries. Genuine apprentices appear to have been recruited in the Kidderminster area, and there grew up a tradition that one generation arranged employment for the next. This suggestion was supported by an employee of Brinton's Carpets since 1926.<sup>11</sup> He was the third generation of his family employed in the industry. His grandfather had

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11. From an interview with Walter Buch in June 1984. He was then retired and in charge of the Muniment's Room.



first been employed in Brinton's carpet mill in the 1860's, and it was his (the grandfather's) recollection that this system had operated for several generations prior to 1860. Parish apprenticeship in the case of the carpet industry was thus a misnomer, as such children were simply a source of cheap labour. The parish providing the apprentice thus rid itself of a pauper child, at the cost of a premium, usually no more than £5, the apprentice's settlement was transferred away from his parish of birth to the parish where he was 'apprenticed'. The parish accepting the apprentice was responsible if the apprentice became pauperised in later life. This was to cause a severe problems for urban parishes, with industries that attracted so called pauper apprentices, because these individuals may have had a greater propensity to be pauperised than did normal citizens.

The only exception to internal recruitment of Kidderminster 'natives' to the carpet industry was from parishes contiguous with the town, for instance from Wribbenhall, the Mittons, Bewdley and parishes to the north and west of the town extending into Shropshire. These parishes were traditionally associated with cottage industry carpet weaving and the existence of these skills made these people obvious recruits to the centralised carpet manufacturies. Of the carpet industry employees in 1851 around 70% were born in Kidderminster, another 5% in

Wilton in Wiltshire, and the other 25% outside Kidderminster. Most 'non natives' were from parishes near to Kidderminster. In other occupations the situation was virtually reversed. Only 23% of people employed in other occupations were from Kidderminster, and 77% were born outside the town. The carpet industry, the prime industry of Kidderminster, recruited from known individuals, who were often related to existing employees in the industry. This was similar to how Mathias<sup>12</sup> describes printers' apprentices in the 18th. century. They caused "the exclusion of 'foreigners' from the trade". Employees in other industries and services were recruited from outside the town. The carpet weavers who were the "artisan elite" of the area were recruited from within the town and the parishes surrounding the town and it appeared doubtful whether parish apprentices were given access to such coveted occupations. The Webbs suggestion of the use of "batch apprenticeship" in the carpet industry thus appeared unlikely unless such apprentices on completion of their apprenticeship habitually left the vicinity.

It appeared that a comparative study of some other area was essential, and glovemaking in Worcester provided an obvious comparison. Glovemaking had been conducted as a cottage industry from Tudor times in the area and again

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12. MATHIAS, Peter, The First Industrial Nation, Harper and Row, 1969, p.365.

it was a prime industry. It remained a cottage industry as factories were not established until the 1880's. The trade was conducted by both men and women. The men cut the leather for the gloves, whilst the women sewed them, and analysis of the men and women engaged in the glovemaking trade in the thirteen parishes that constituted the City of Worcester, revealed the results presented as Table 2.2.

TABLE 2.2.

Individuals Over the Age of 25 Years by Place of Birth and Occupation.

	Place of Birth.			%age Inhabitants.			%age Workforce.		
	W	Other	Tot	W	Other	Tot	W	Other	Tot
Gloving	300	110	410	14.8	3.2	7.5	73.2	26.8	100.0
Other Trades.	1,720	3,350	5,070	85.2	96.8	92.5	33.9	66.1	100.0
TOTAL.	2,020	3,460	5,480	100.0	100.0	100.0	36.9	66.1	100.0
Gloving	1,270	410	1,680	46.2	9.7	24.1	75.6	24.4	100.0
Other Trades.	1,480	3,800	5,280	53.8	90.3	75.9	28.0	72.0	100.0
TOTAL.	2,750	4,210	6,960	100.0	100.0	100.0	39.5	60.5	100.0

SOURCE: 1851 Census. P.P. [1631]LXXXV. I.U.P. Population  
Vol. 7. Entries for Worcester.

The same type of 'internal recruitment' found in the carpet industry was seen to operate in the gloving industry. Around three quarters of the labour in glovemaking, both male and female, were from Worcester parishes. Among men, glovemaking was a minority occupation, as the majority of labour was employed in sewing gloves, which was regarded as women's work. For women gloving provided almost a quarter of all occupations within Worcester City. As in the case of carpet making at Kidderminster, the majority of inhabitants of the City of Worcester, at the time of the 1851 Census, were born outside the city. 63% of males and 60% of females came from outside the city. In the glovemaking trade approximately three quarters of the men and women employed in the trade were Worcester born. There was no suspicion of "batch apprenticing", and one industry, the glovemaking industry, predominated. The Worcester Royal Porcelain factory was not a large employer of labour at this time. The situation prevailing in Worcester in 1851 was very similar to the situation of Kidderminster. Both towns' prime industries recruited new labour predominantly from the families of the workers already employed in the prime trade.

The 'individual apprenticeship' analagous to the apprenticeship arranged by an independent parent for his offspring, and the 'allotment of apprentices to ratepayers' was certainly in use throughout the period

1781 to 1834. The 'allotment system' had been set up by an Act of Parliament in 1696.<sup>13</sup> It existed until the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act when it was made illegal, as it had become a source of much abuse. For the fifty or so years from 1781 there are still nine hundred extant parish apprenticeship indentures. In fact there were well over 1,000 such indentures, but those for the parish of Lindridge are in such poor condition that they began to disintegrate when handled and were unusable. Existing indentures were from twenty seven of the two hundred and three county parishes. Whilst it was difficult to justify the belief that the sources that have survived are representative, analysis of the extant records appeared worthwhile. The indentures changed design and wording several times during the period under investigation, but they were recognisably different from private apprenticeship indentures, which tended to be smaller and very differently worded. Some of the parish apprenticeship indentures remained attached to a "bond of agreement" between master and apprentice. Sometimes when an individual was apprenticed to a master to learn a trade a fee was payable and this was recorded on the indenture. This made possible apprenticeships outside the parish of birth which had the advantage of altering the apprentice's parish of settlement at the end of the apprenticeship. Sometimes apprenticeships were arranged

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13. 7 & 8 Will. III. c.32.

without a fee being paid and the incentive in these circumstances for taking an apprentice, apart from obtaining cheap labour, appeared uncertain. Bettey<sup>14</sup> cited a 17th. century example of clothing being given with apprentices at Yetminster in Devon. There was no indication that this was done in Worcestershire. The labour must have been very cheap to make such an arrangement worthwhile to the employer. What the apprentice gained from the arrangement must have varied and is impossible to ascertain. There was also no indication of the system described by Makin to the Select Committee in 1818,<sup>15</sup> where apprentices were sent without indentures. This was not surprising, however, as to reveal this practice would be to reveal an illegality.

Of eight hundred and ninety one apprenticeships in Worcestershire only one hundred and sixty two were endorsed with a fee. Fees were less common than might have been expected. Of the indentures where a fee was paid, only seventy five (45%) were for apprenticeships in the parish of residence. Forty three were fees paid in Hallow parish, where a fee of £1-10-0 was paid. No

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14. BETTEY, J.H., Rural Life in Wessex, Moonraker, 1977, p. 56.

15. Evidence of Samuel Makin to the Select Committee on Silk Ribbon Weavers, Report, IX (1818), 36, 126 Cited by ROSE, Michael E., The English Poor Law 1780-1930, David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1971, pp.54-5.

fee was paid at Hallow in July 1805 when nine children were apprenticed. This may have been due to the absent mindedness of the clerk, or for some unrecorded reason. It might be suggested that apprenticeships where a fee was paid were most successful as the employer felt duty bound to teach the apprentice certain skills, as he had received a fee to do this, but there was no evidence to substantiate this view and such statements are pure conjecture. The allotment of apprentices was a kind of enforced 'boarding out' or 'fostering'. It resembled 'true apprenticeship' only in that an indenture was used. The stated occupation in which the child had been bound was in many cases simply a statement of the occupation of the ratepayer. Villiers made many statements to the Poor Law Inquiry Commission in 1833 suggesting that this form of apprenticeship was wholly unsatisfactory. "Husbandry" for boys and "housewifery" for girls, were the most commonly recorded occupations in the sample of indentures remaining for Worcestershire. In a few cases, nineteen out of eight hundred and ninety one, the occupation was recorded as "useful", and in forty four cases the occupational description was left blank. In many cases probably no trade was taught, but on other occasions a trade other than the one recorded was probably taught.

In some Worcestershire parishes the 'allotment system' of apprenticing was used; there appeared to be an initial acceptance by the master of his so called

apprentice, and only at Powick was there evidence of refusal to accept an allotted apprentice. Here, there were three cases in 1818 of refusals. Ann Frost refused to accept Samual Callow aged nine years, son of Thomas and Sarah Callow, as a husbandry apprentice, on the 16th June 1818, and within two months William Blew refused to accept an orphan child, Benjamin Jones, as a husbandry apprentice. Both of these indentures were endorsed with "Fined £10 for not taking an apprentice". Another case occurred within a few weeks. Abraham Thompson was "Fined £10 for returning a (husbandry) apprentice". The original indenture for this boy, William Wynne aged ten years, had been written in June 1818, and why he was returned was not recorded. It might have been that the poor ratepayers in question deemed it better to pay a £10 fine than to take an unwanted apprentice. In parishes using allotment of apprentices no master in the period 1781 to 1834 received more than one apprentice, possibly demonstrating that the system was not popular. Had the system been beneficial to the employer they would have applied for more parish apprentices.

Table 2.3 indicates parish apprenticeship indentures extant for the twenty seven parishes investigated, and the numbers of male and female apprentices for those parishes is recorded. These parishes varied considerably in size and character from the extremely small parish of Besford with a population of one hundred and two at the 1801 Census, to the



TABLE 2.3.

Parish Apprenticeship Indentures For Worcestershire  
Parishes 1781 to 1834. Males and Females Separately.

PARISH.	MALES.		FEMALES.		TOTAL.
	No.	%	No.	%	
Abberley.	22	68.7	10	31.3	32
Alvechurch.	126	60.6	82	39.4	208
Astley.	10		5		15
Bengeworth.	1		0		1
Besford.	1		1		2
Bredon.	0		2		2
Bretforton.	1		1		2
Chaddesley Corbett.	35	77.0	10	23.0	45
Claines.	79	61.2	49	38.3	128
Droitwich.	78	72.2	23	22.8	101
Eldersfield.	2		0		2
Evesham - All Saints.	1		1		2
Hallow.	35	50.7	34	49.3	69
Hanley Castle.	2		1		3
Himbleton.	22	71.0	9	29.0	31
Huddington.	0		1		1
Inkberrow.	0		1		1
Kempsey.	3		4		7
Kidderminster - St Mary's.	19	56.0	15	44.0	34
Leigh.	23	57.6	17		40
Lindridge.	1		1		1
Ombersley.	25	65.4	13	34.6	38
Powick.	58	76.3	18	23.7	76
Ripple.	3		2		5
Warndon.	1		2		3
Welland.	8		6		14
Worcester - All Parishes.	20	87.0	3	13.0	23
TOTAL.	576	65.1	311	34.9	887

SOURCE: Apprenticeship Indentures in Parish Collections.

NOTE: Male:Female Proportions were only calculated for  
parishes with over 2.5% of the total of extant  
county indentures.

parishes of Worcester City, (thirteen of them) with a combined population in 1801 of 14,036. Comparison of the number of extant indentures and the size of the population of the parish indicated that no pro rata apprenticeship rate, analagous to marriage rate, could be calculated. This was to be expected as local conditions determined the need for parish apprenticeships and these conditions varied considerably. It was generally impossible to ascertain the completeness of the records remaining, but in the case of Alvechurch, Droitwich and Himbleton parishes, there is corroborative evidence of the completeness of the records. Under an Act of Parliament of 1767<sup>16</sup> a "Register of Apprentices" had to be kept, and in these three parishes registers are still extant. The indentures remaining are complete for these places and thus the records of other parishes are also probably complete. The parish incumbent responsible for such records appeared likely to be diligent in keeping them.

Alvechurch, with a population of 1,288 in 1801, apprenticed two hundred and eight children, whilst several small parishes apprenticed very few children. Warndon (population one hundred and twenty six in 1801), apprenticed only three children in the period and Huddington (population one hundred and eight in 1801) only one child. Peculiarly Evesham All Saints parish apprenticed only two children, in spite of the

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16. 7 Geo. III. c.39.

parish having a population of 1,197 in 1801, so that one would have expected more children to be apprenticed. Local circumstances may have made parish apprenticeship inappropriate or unnecessary in this case. More likely, however, was the loss of some parish apprenticeship indentures.

In all parishes sampled where there was a substantial number of parish apprentices, male apprentices outnumbered female apprentices. Assuming that there was a 50:50 proportion of male and female in the population there must have been a reason for this. In the City of Worcester there was an 87:13 proportion of males to females amongst parish apprentices, and it approached a 50:50 proportion only at Hallow which had a peculiar apprenticing policy. The small numbers of girls requiring apprenticeship could have been due to the relative ease with which girls obtained domestic employment. For instance Worcester City had a great demand for such 'domestics' and it might have been expected that the contiguous parish of Hallow would be similar, but by paying a premium with its apprentices potential master expected and obtained a fee with parish apprentices from Hallow. This probably explained the disparity. 87% of apprenticeships recorded in Hallow, including girl apprentices, received a fee.

The parishes listed in Table 2.3 included large, intermediate and small places and most occupations were also represented. Places in the county did, however, vary considerably in terms of remoteness. Generally, the county was developed along the valley of the River Severn and of the River Avon, which had market gardens even at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The area of the county bordering, and forming part of, the Black Country was industrialised and thus urbanised, with the highest population densities. King's Norton parish was contiguous with Birmingham which acted as a magnet for migrants. "Stepwise migration", as suggested by Redford,<sup>17</sup> appeared to operate here. An area of upland in the extreme west of the county, around Clee Hill, depopulated because of this migration. Generally, the highly urban industrialised unions in and around the Black Country were surprisingly not represented in the sample of apprenticing parishes. Only Cradley and Oldswinford took parish apprentices from the county, and then only one apprentice to each. The indentures extant survived by chance and were not an ideal random sample, but they are sufficiently

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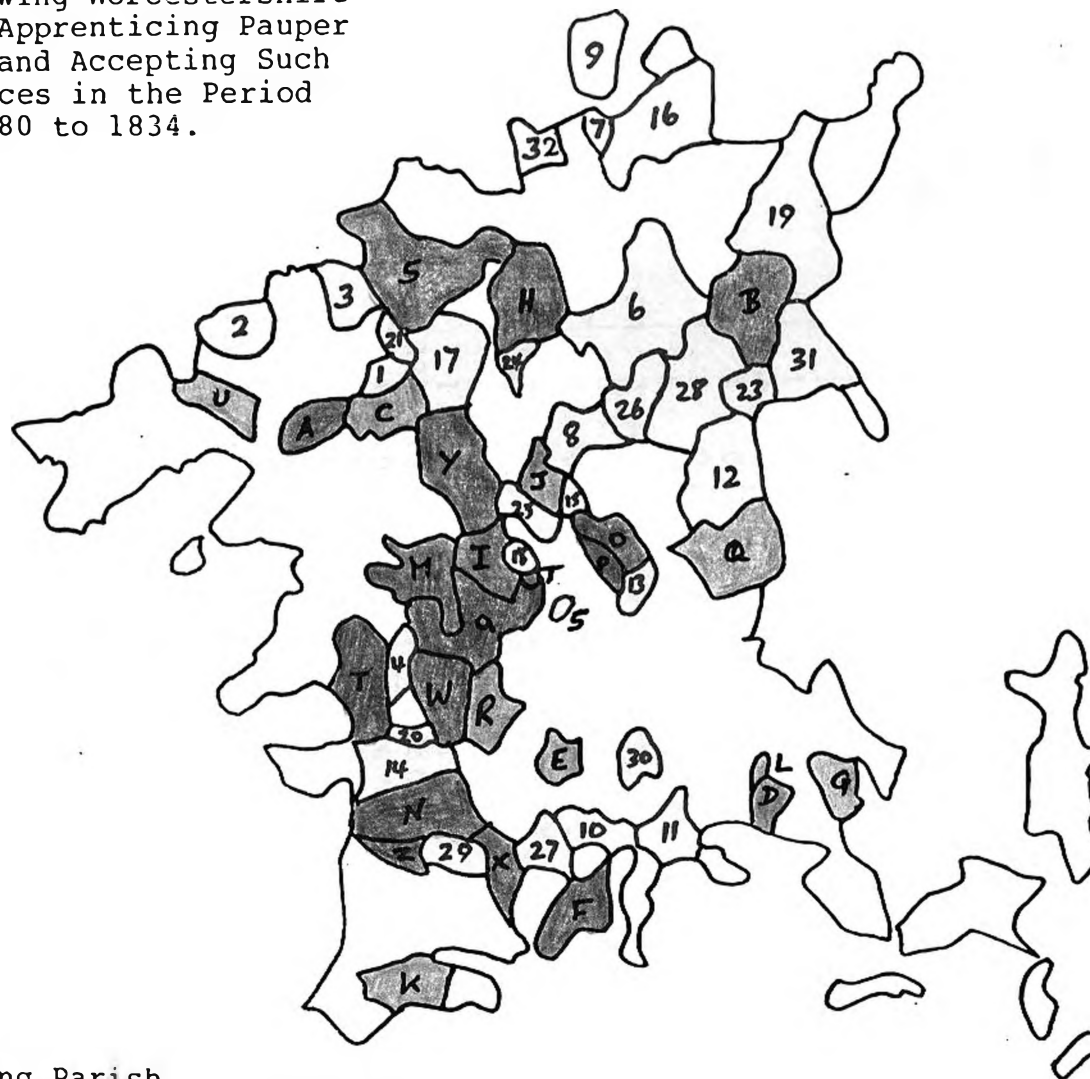
17. REDFORD, Arthur, (Revised and Edited by CHALONER, W.H.) Labour Migration in England 1800-1850, Manchester University Press, 1976. pp.182-90.

representative to make detailed analysis worthwhile. The sample size, of about nine hundred, also appeared satisfactory. The parishes with apprenticeship indentures still in existence, and those parishes where apprentices were accepted, are shown on the county map (Figure 2.1.) Table 2.4 indicates the occupations to which children were apprenticed in the period from 1781 to 1834. Clearly "farming" and "husbandry" outnumbered all other occupations for male apprentices. 56.8% of apprentices were husbandry apprentices. Housewifery provided 66.7% of parish apprenticeship places for females. Investigation of these occupations in individual parishes is presented as Table 2.5.

It was clear that "husbandry" and "housewifery" were most common in rural parishes. To test this, a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was calculated, relating the percentage of "husbandry" apprentices (of the total apprentices for a parish) with the population of the parish at the 1801 Census. A coefficient of +0.53 was obtained. An inevitable relatively strong connection between population size and tendency to apprentice boys to "husbandry" in small rural parishes was established. A similar calculation for girls apprenticed in "housewifery" gave a correlation coefficient of +0.38, indicating a moderate correlation, but not a significant one, but "housewifery" was an occupation applicable to both urban and rural areas. Both husbandry and

FIGURE 2.1.

A Map Showing Worcestershire  
Parishes Apprenticing Pauper  
Children and Accepting Such  
Apprentices in the Period  
1780 to 1834.



Apprenticing Parish.  
 Accepting Parish.  
 Parish BOTH Apprenticing and Accepting.

APPRENTICING PARISHES.	ACCEPTING PARISHES.
A. Abberley.	1. Arley.
B. Alvechurch.	2. Bayton.
C. Astley.	3. Bevdley.
D. Bengeworth.	4. Bransford.
E. Beasford.	5. Bredicott.
F. Bredon.	6. Bromsgrove.
G. Bretforton.	7. Cradley.
H. Chaddeley Corbett.	8. Danderhill.
I. Clelnea.	9. Dudley.
J. Droitwich.	10. Eckington.
K. Eldersfield.	11. Eley Castle.
L. Evesham - All Saints.	12. Fickenham.
M. Hallow.	13. Grafton Flyford.
N. Hanley Castle.	14. Great Malvern.
O. Hableton.	15. Hadsor.
P. Huddington.	16. Halesoven.
Q. Inkberrow.	17. Hartlebury.
R. Kempsey.	18. Kidnallip.
S. Kidderminster - St. Mary.	19. King's Norton.
T. Leigh.	20. Madresfield.
U. Lindridge.	21. Milton.
V. Ombersley.	22. Oldswinford.
W. Pershore.	23. Redditch.
X. Ripple.	24. Rushock.
Y. Verdon.	25. Salwarpe.
Z. Volland.	26. Stone Prior.
a. Worcester - All Parishes.	27. Strensham.
	28. Tardobridge.
	29. Upton.
	30. Wick.
	31. Wychley.

TABLE 2.4.

Occupations to which poor children were apprenticed 1780 to 1834.

	SEX.				SEX.		
	M	F	T		M	F	T
Barber.	1	0	1	Leather Grounder.	2	0	2
Bargee/Waterman.	3	0	3	Leather Parer.	1	0	1
Basket Maker.	0	1	1	Loather.	1	0	1
Blacksmith.	5	0	5	Locksmith.	3	0	3
Brassfounder.	1	0	1	Maltster.	1	0	1
Breechesmaker.	2	0	2	Mantua Maker.	0	1	1
Bricklayer.	5	0	5	Miller.	1	0	1
Brickmaker.	1	0	1	Miner.	8	0	8
Bridlemaker.	3	0	3	Nailer.	8	1	9
Brushmaker.	1	0	1	Needlemaker.	5	3	8
Bucklemaker.	2	0	2	Papermaker.	1	0	1
Bustlemaker.	1	0	1	Patternmaker.	1	0	1
Butcher.	5	0	5	Pavior.	1	0	1
Carpenter.	8	0	8	Pawn Broker.	1	0	1
Cheapmaker.	2	0	2	Pipemaker.	1	0	1
China Painter.	0	1	1	Saddler.	1	0	1
Coachmaker.	1	0	1	Sail Spinner.	0	2	2
Cooper.	1	0	1	Salt Labourer.	1	0	1
Dressmaker.	0	3	3	Sawyer.	1	0	1
Dyer.	1	0	1	Service.	6	8	14
Engine Builder.	1	0	1	Shoemaker.	34	1	35
Farmer/Husbandry.	327	23	350	Silversmith.	0	1	1
File Striker.	1	0	1	Spectaclemaker.	1	0	1
Fishmonger.	0	1	1	Stirrupmaker.	1	0	1
Flax Dresser.	0	1	1	Stockingweaver.	5	0	5
Glass Cutter.	1	0	1	Tailor.	10	2	12
Glove Cutter.	1	0	1	Tin Plate Worker.	1	0	1
Glover.	5	14	19	Toymaker.	2	0	2
Horn Button Maker.	1	1	2	Tracemaker.	2	0	2
Housewifery.	13	206	219	Useful Occupations.	9	10	19
Hurdlemaker.	1	0	1	Victualler.	2	0	2
Ironfounder.	1	0	1	Weaver.	33	5	38
Knitter.	0	3	3	Wheelwright.	3	0	3
Lafindary.	1	0	1	Woodturner.	1	0	1
Lath and Plasterer.	2	0	2				
Leather Dresser.	4	0	4	No Entry.	25	24	50
				TOTAL.	575	312	887

SOURCE: Apprenticeship Indentures in various Parish Collections.

TABLE 2.5.

The percentage of Husbandry and Housewifery Apprentices  
in various Worcestershire Parishes - 1780 to 1834.

	Husbandry.	Housewifery.
Abberley.	81.9	80.0
Alvechurch.	76.7	78.5
Astley.	88.9	50.0
Chaddesley Corbett.	80.1	90.9
Claines.	29.1	34.7
Droitwich.	12.5	81.0
Hallow.	74.3	85.3
Himbleton.	95.5	100.0
Kidderminster - St Mary's.	52.6	40.0
Leigh.	95.7	100.0
Ombersley.	88.0	100.0
Powick.	89.7	55.6
Welland.	0.0 *	0.0 *
Worcester - All Parishes.	15.0	0.0

\* No occupations were entered on the parish  
apprenticeship indentures in Welland Parish.

SOURCE: Parish Indentures in various Parish  
Collections.

housewifery apprenticeships were probably very different from craft apprenticeships and they probably hardly warranted being called apprenticeships. The skills taught were easily available elsewhere.

Further examination of Table 2.4 indicates that the occupations of glover, shoemaker and weaver were well represented. Glovemaking was the prime industry of Worcester, and all glovemaking apprenticeships were in the city, where girl apprentices outnumbered boy apprentices. The presence of other trades connected with



leather, such as "leather grounder" or "loather", employed men in the tanneries of Worcester. Shoemaking was easily carried on in the City as there was a plentiful supply of locally tanned leather. Understandably around half of all cordwainer's or shoemaker's apprentices were in Worcester. Shoemakers were present in most communities, but some of these were no doubt employed in shoe repair as opposed to shoemaking. Worcester became the shoemaking centre for the area. "Weaver" was used to include individuals employed in textile industries other than carpet making, and five of the thirty eight individuals described as "weavers" were employed in weaving cloth, while the rest were involved in carpet weaving. In view of the changed mode of production in the carpet industry and the subsequent growth of the centralised industry in the Kidderminster area this was no surprise. Carpet weavers were differentiated into bombazeen weavers and ordinary carpet weavers. The carpet weavers made pile carpets; whilst the bombazeen weavers made closely woven carpets with uncut piles and they had greater prestige than the ordinary carpet weavers, partly because of the greater measure of skill required and partly because bombazeen carpets were more expensive than pile carpets.

The need for the apprenticing of children clearly varied according to the economic climate prevailing in the local area and in the country as a whole, and as the

cost of living increased so pressure was exerted on personal economic circumstances, a pressure the poor felt most keenly of all. Those individuals on the margins of pauperism were most affected and any increase in the cost of living increased the numbers applying for parish relief thus making their children liable to be apprenticed at the expense of the parish.

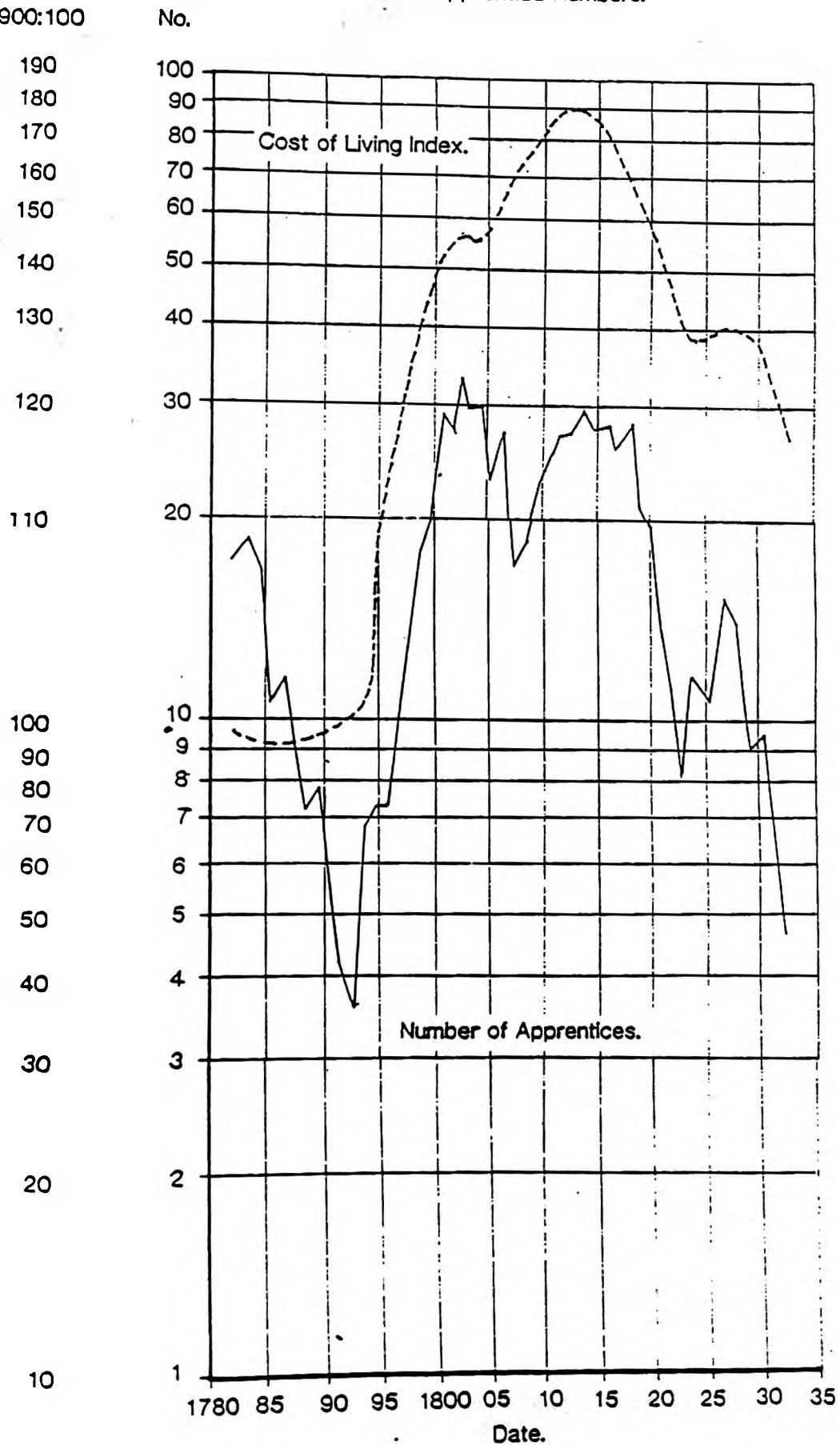
To take apprentice numbers year by year would be misleading as apprenticing was a cumulative process, with the clustering of dates of apprenticeship suggesting that parish officials waited until there were a number of children in the parish to be apprenticed before proceeding to bind them. Examination of the Worcester Herald, between 1780 and 1834, revealed cereal prices in local markets. These were very similar to national cereal prices. As bread remained a staple diet of the poor, such cereal prices related very closely to the cost of bread, to the cost of living, and to real wage levels of the poor nationally. The real wage levels cited by Tucker<sup>18</sup> were used, and a 5 year running average was computed for cost of living and real wage levels. This avoided the problem of clustering. The running mean of cost of living, and the numbers apprenticed, was compared on the same graph (Figure 2.2) for the period from 1781 to 1834. A semi-

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18. TUCKER, Rufus S., "Real Wages of Artisans in London 1729-1835", in TAYLOR, Arthur J., The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution, Methuen, 1975, pp.21-35.

Cost of  
Living  
Index.  
1900:100

FIGURE 2.2. Running Mean of Cost of Living Index  
and Apprentice Numbers.



logarithmic scale was used to cramp the scales to make comparison easier. From Figure 2.2 it appeared that there was a connection between the cost of living index<sup>19</sup> and the numbers of pauper children being apprenticed. To ascertain the strength of this relationship a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient<sup>20</sup> was calculated correlating the rank order of the number of apprenticeships to the rank order of the cost of living index taken over the period 1781 to 1834. A Correlation Coefficient of +0.75 resulted, which indicated a strong relationship between the cost of living and the tendency for parishes to apprentice children who were destitute or near destitute. Any substantial sub group of the main sample, such as the numbers of male or female apprentices, the numbers of apprentices in urban as opposed to rural areas, or the numbers of apprentices to husbandry or housewifery, when correlated against cost of living gave a Spearman Rho of between +0.67 and +0.80. The tendency to apprentice in

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19. A Cost of living Index relates costs to a base date, hence a cost in the future (or in the past) is given as a percentage of the cost at the base date. The graph plotted here suggests that there may be a connection between a rise in the cost of living (index) and the tendency to apprentice pauper children. The correlation coefficient confirms this.

20. Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) provided a means of relating the cost of living index to the number of parish apprentices in a year. The rank order of the cost of living index was correlated against the rank order of the number of apprentices in that year. The closer the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient approaches to +1.00 the stronger the relationship between the distributions. Any Spearman rho over +0.50 represents a relatively strong relationship between the distributions tested.

any of these subgroups thus increased when the cost of living increased. The mechanism postulated initially, where rising cost of living plunged more families into accepting poor relief thus exposing children to the possibility of being bound a parish apprentice, appeared most reasonable.

Table 2.6 indicates the relative number of males and females apprenticed in five yearly intervals from 1781 to 1835, and a strong relationship is indicated between both male and female apprenticing figures and cost of living, but this may not have meant that the tendency for males to be apprenticed was similar to the tendency for females.

TABLE 2.6.

Number of Parish Apprentices by Sex for 5 yearly intervals between 1781 and 1835.

DATE.	MALE.	FEMALE.	TOTAL.
1781-5	57	37	94
1786-90	27	20	47
1791-5	13	7	20
1796-1800	41	28	69
1801-5	96	71	167
1806-10	58	30	88
1811-5	87	47	134
1816-20	92	40	132
1821-5	32	12	44
1826-30	47	19	66
1831-5	11	6	17
TOTAL.	561	317	878

SOURCE: Parish Indentures in various Parish Collections.

By calculating a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient it was possible to compare these two distributions. Correlating male apprentice numbers against female apprentice numbers a Spearman Rho Coefficient of +0.96 was obtained, showing a very strong relationship between the two apprenticing patterns across time. Thus, in spite of the numbers of pauper girls finding employment before they became liable to be bound apprentice in domestic work, there was a strong similarity to the apprenticing pattern for boys. This appeared to strengthen the case for local circumstances and particularly the economic conditions being crucial in determining parish apprenticing rate.

As economic circumstances became harsher more children became the responsibility of the parish and the number of parish apprenticeships increased. The age distribution of apprentices altered as economic circumstances altered and younger children became available in greater numbers in times of financial hardship. The average age of the apprentices was thus depressed. Table 2.7 indicates the average age of apprentices computed over five yearly intervals from 1781 to 1835. Also recorded was the national real wage index taken from Tucker.<sup>21</sup>

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21. TUCKER, Op cit.

TABLE 2.7.

Average Age of Apprenticing and Mean of Real  
Wage Indices by 5 yearly interval .

DATE.	AGE.	MEAN REAL WAGE INDEX.
1781-5	10.8	46.14
1786-90	11.5	47.90
1791-5	11.2	45.78
1796-1800	9.1	40.78
1801-5	9.7	36.70
1806-10	10.3	28.24
1811-5	10.0	39.52
1816-20	10.8	42.42
1821-5	11.3	51.22
1826-30	10.1	52.52
1831-5	10.9	54.64

REAL WAGE INDEX BASE DATE=1900.

SOURCES:

Of Average Age of Apprentices: Parish Apprenticeship  
Indentures in various Parish Collections.

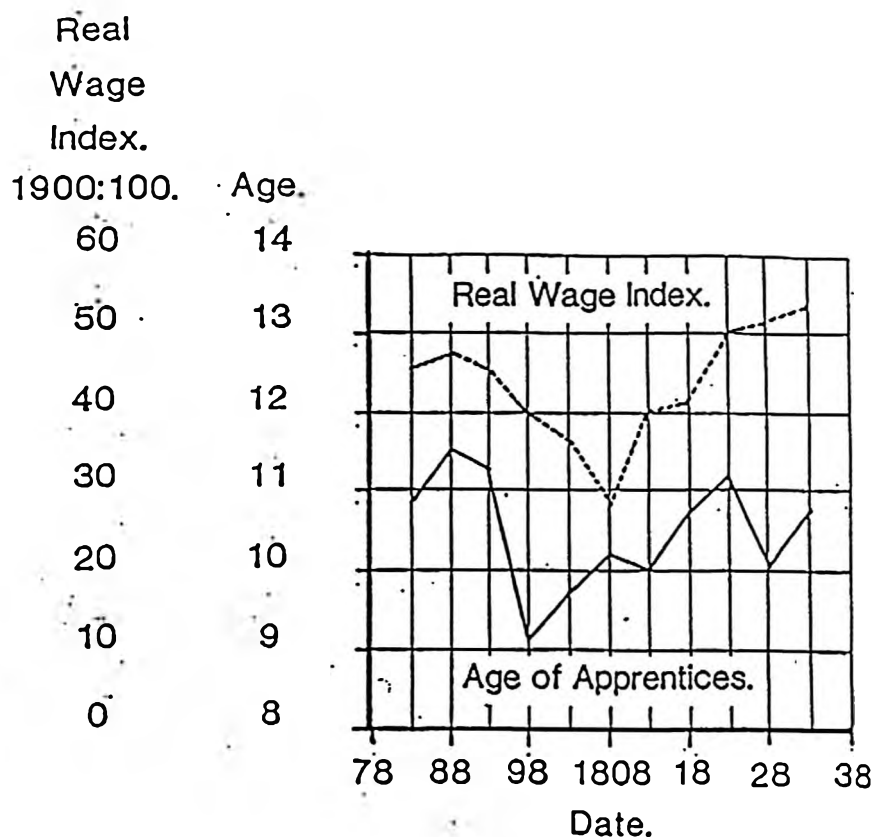
Of Real wage Indices: TUCKER, R., "Real Wages Of  
Artisans in London 1729-1935" in TAYLOR, A.J.,  
The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial  
Revolution, Methuen, 1975, pp.21-35.

A graphical presentation of this (Figure 2.3) appears to indicate that there was a connection between the age at which children were apprenticed and the real wage index, but this comparison was complicated by the lower age limit for apprenticing, set at seven years old by an Act of Parliament in 1698.<sup>22</sup> No child could be apprenticed before it was seven years old. To make meaningful comparison

22. 9 & 10 Will. III. c.14.

GRAPHS IN THIS CHAPTER  
WERE PRODUCED FROM  
STATISTICS DERIVED FROM  
PARISH APPRENTICESHIP  
INDENTURES FOR VARIOUS  
WORCESTERSHIRE PARISHES.

FIGURE 2.3.  
Graph of Mean Age  
of Apprentices on  
a Common Axis with  
Real Wage Index.



it was necessary to investigate the apprenticing of seven and eight year olds. The numbers of seven and eight year olds apprenticed in five yearly intervals from 1781 to 1835 are presented in Table 2.8. No seven or eight year olds were apprenticed after 1820.

Using the sample of one hundred and two children aged seven or eight years old who were apprenticed in the period 1781 to 1820 correlated with the real wage index, a Spearman Rho value of +0.78 was obtained. This indicated a strong relationship between the tendency to apprentice young children and a deteriorating economic climate locally. As real wages fell individuals became financially distressed and more young children were apprenticed.



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TABLE 2.8.

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The Numbers of 7 and 8 year olds Apprenticed and the Mean Real Wage Index.

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DATE.	NUMBER OF 7 & 8 YEAR OLDS.	MEAN REAL WAGE INDEX.
1781-5	3	46.14
1786-90	2	47.90
1791-5	0	45.78
1796-1800	16	40.78
1801-5	48	36.70
1806-10	9	28.42
1811-5	21	39.52
1816-20	3	42.42

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REAL WAGE INDEX BASE DATE=1900.

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SOURCES:

Of Average Age of Apprentices: Parish Apprenticeship Indentures in various Parish Collections.

Of Real wage Indices: TUCKER, R., "Real Wages Of Artisans in London 1729-1935" in TAYLOR, A.J., The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution, Methuen, 1975, pp.21-35.

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Figure 2.4 is an attempt to represent the age structure of apprenticeships in various parishes. Although parish apprentices could be as young as seven years of age some parishes never apprenticed at this age. Most parishes used eight years of age as the minimum age for apprenticing, but a few places apprenticed children who were sixteen years old.

This was unusual. More usually the age range for

apprenticing was from eight to twelve years. The mean age for apprenticing varied from parish to parish, as indicated in Figure 2.4. The lowest mean age of apprenticing was at Leigh, where it was under nine years, and the highest was Kidderminster St. Mary's, where the mean age was around twelve years of age. The range of ages at which children were apprenticed is indicated by the length of the horizontal bars on the graph.

A Spearman Rho value of +0.63 was obtained for the relationship between age of commencement of apprenticeship and the percentage of husbandry apprentices in a parish. It was rural parishes that apprenticed at a younger age to husbandry, but the decision to apprentice at a young age may not have been a conscious one. Rather it may have been that husbandry apprentices were employed in menial tasks on the land and they were equipped to do this from an early age.

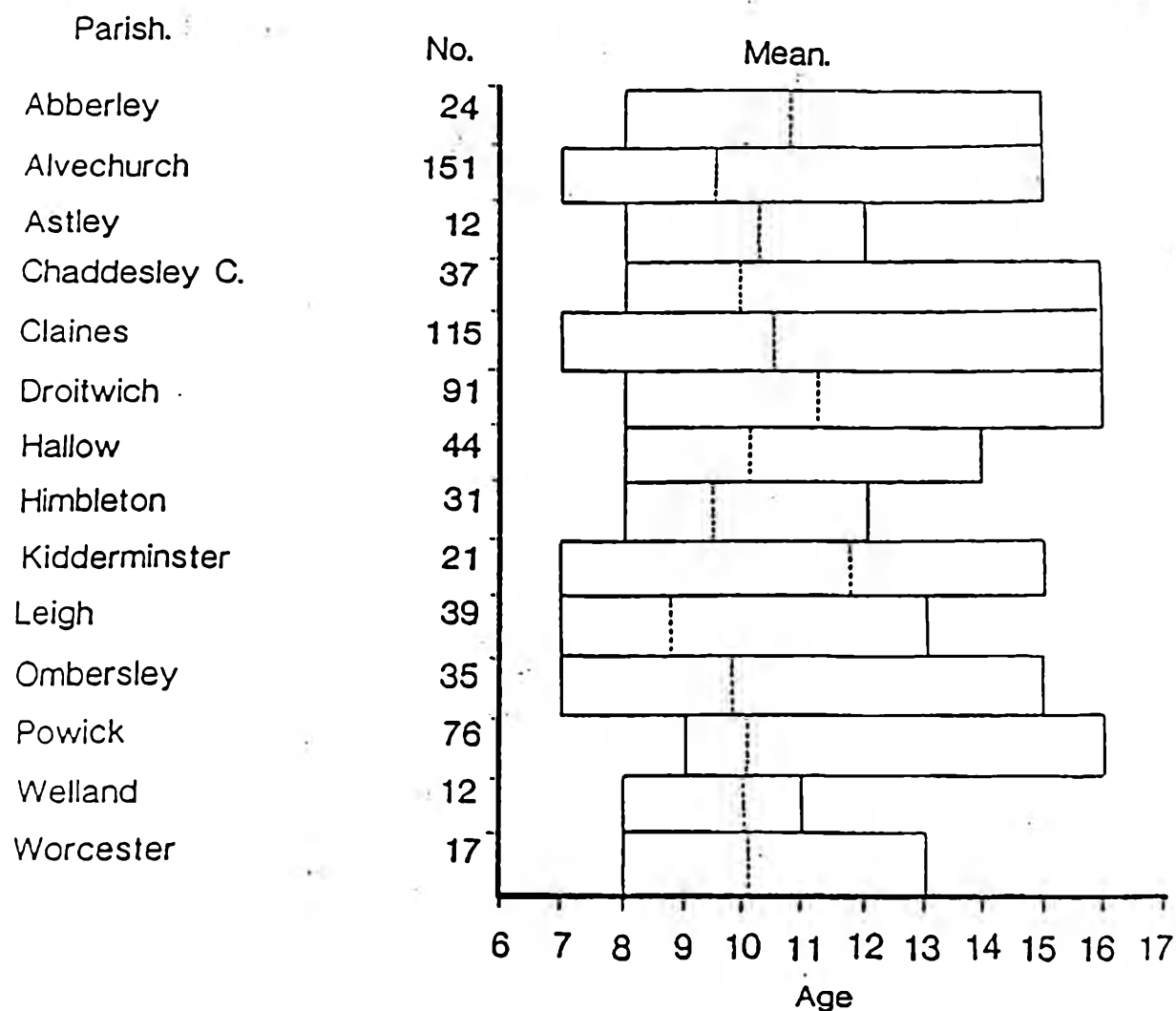
Under the Elizabethan Statute of 1563,<sup>23</sup> a minimum duration of seven years for an apprenticeship was laid down, but male apprentices were normally apprenticed until they were twenty four years old and females until they were twenty one years old (or until they married). These age limits were used in Worcestershire in the period from 1781 to 1834 and most parish apprenticeship indentures stated this.

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23. 5 Eliz. I. c.3.

FIGURE 2.4.

The Age of Commencement of Apprenticeship in Various Parishes.



The exception was for the parish of Welland. This very rural parish turned to apprenticeship as a means of getting rid of pauper children late in the period under study. Parish apprenticeship indentures for the period up to 1750 were included in the parish papers, but there were no more until after 1820. When the parish restarted

apprenticing, indentures were endorsed with a 'completion date' usually at the child's sixteenth birthday. Of fourteen apprenticeships arranged, twelve were for unspecified trades, and the occupational description on these indentures was left blank. Two specified occupations; a butcher's apprentice at Cheltenham and a tailor's apprentice in Ledbury. Both of these specified twenty one years of age as the completion age. The decision to specify sixteen years of age as the end of the term of apprenticeship was clearly a conscious one, and this must have gone some way towards alleviating the anxiety of parishioners allotted an apprentice. Elsewhere the age of twenty four years was specified and allotted apprentices may thus have been the master's responsibility for up to seventeen years. It was difficult to know why other parishes did not adopt a shorter period of apprenticeship to quell the anxieties of poor ratepayers about the system. Figure 2.5 is a graphical presentation of the distribution of the date of commencement of apprenticeship for children aged eight years old. It was apparent that the recruitment of such young children dramatically increased in the period from 1794 to 1808, and further investigation of the cause of this was needed.

Figure 2.6 consists of a graph showing the number of eight year olds apprenticed plotted on the same axes

FIGURE 2.5. The Distribution of Apprentices  
or Given, Age 1781-1835.

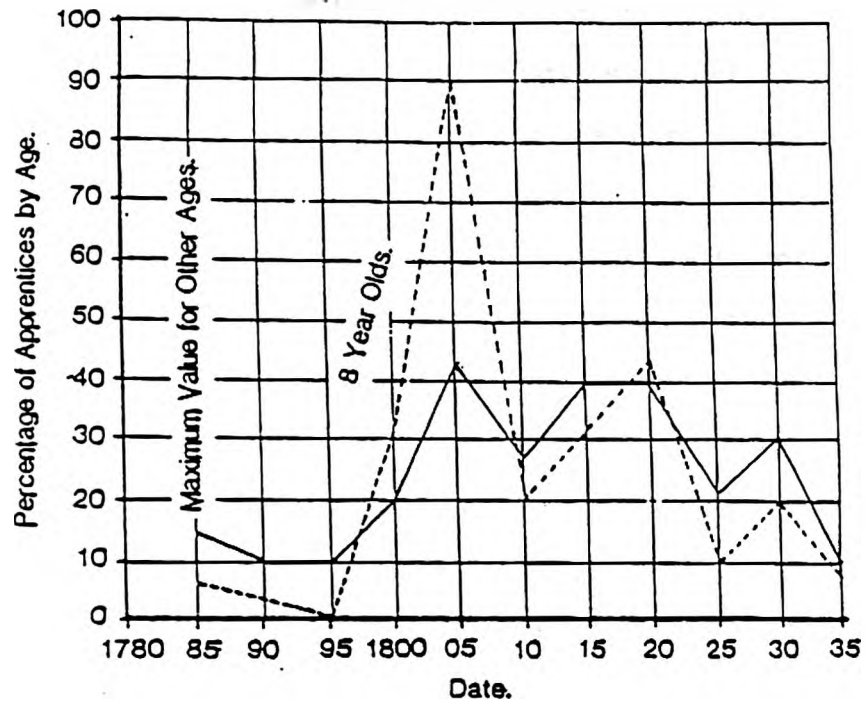
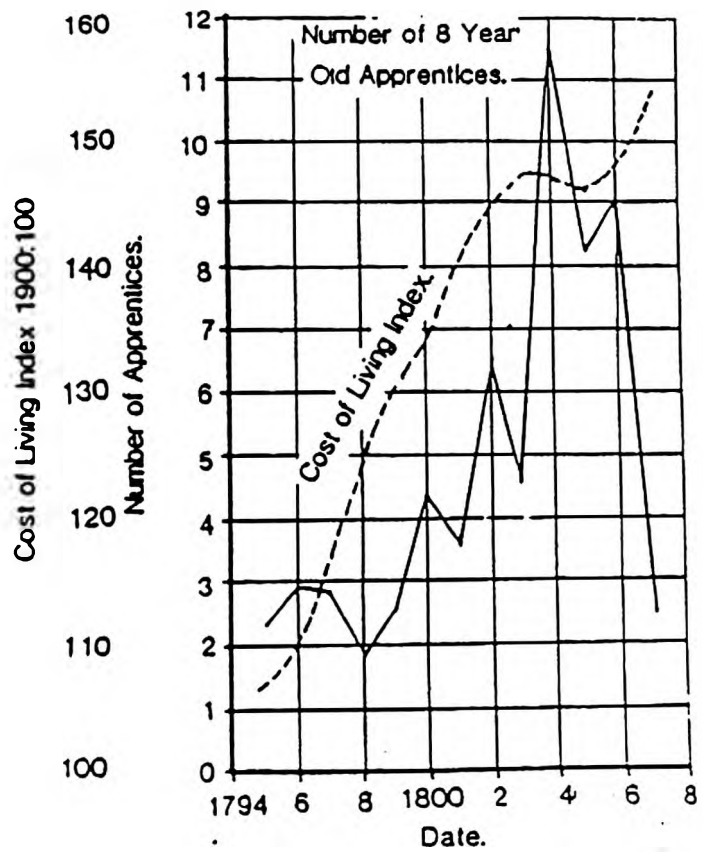


FIGURE 2.6.  
8 Year Old  
Apprentice  
Numbers and  
the Cost of  
Living Index.

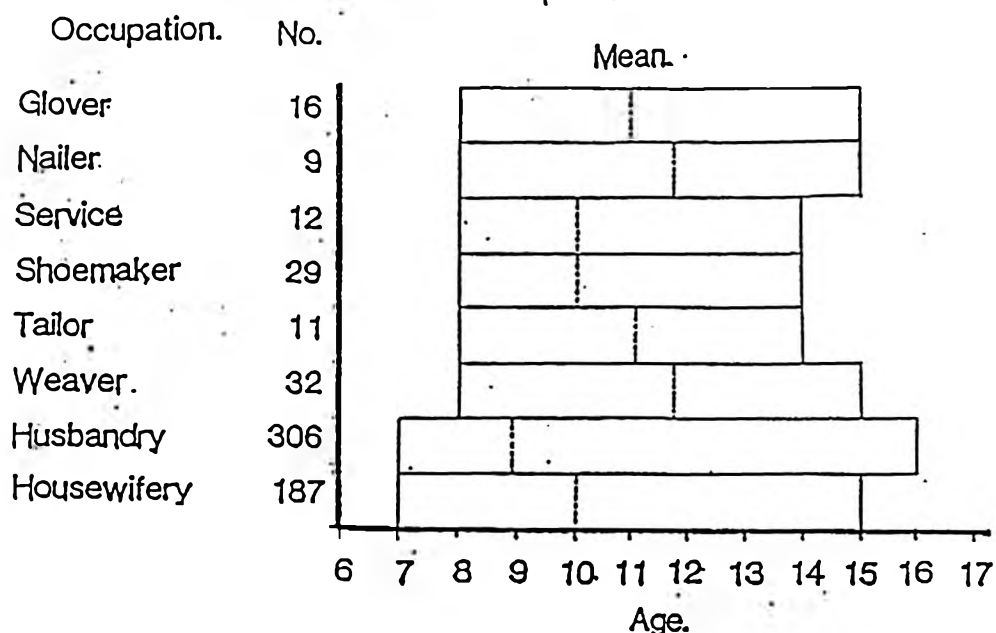


as the Cost of Living Index, from Tucker.<sup>24</sup> Once apprenticed, these seven year old children were not available for future apprenticing, so that apprentice numbers in later years were at a reduced rate, making the pattern of apprenticing of eight year olds uneven. The upward trend in apprentice numbers between 1795 and 1804 was matched by a rise in the cost of living. A correlation of these trends gave a Spearman's Rho value of +0.83, indicating a strong connection between the apprenticing of eight year olds and the cost of living index. Figure 2.7 represents the age of commencement of apprenticeship in various occupations. The horizontal bars indicate the range of ages at which children were apprenticed. The mean age of apprenticeship indicated the nature of the age distribution. A low mean age meant a tendency to apprentice at a younger age and a high mean age a tendency to apprentice at an older age. Noticeably the average age of commencement of husbandry apprenticeships was over one year lower than the average age for other occupations, thus indicating the possibility of younger children being employed in that occupation, as little skill was needed in some agricultural tasks. Of girls' occupations housewifery apprentices had the youngest average age of commencement and such occupations were most common for girls, particularly in rural areas. These also required little

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24. TUCKER, Op cit.

FIGURE 2.7- The AGE of Commencement of Apprenticeship in Various Occupations.



skill and could be managed by young pauper girls. When rural and urban housewifery apprentices were separated, it was found that the average age of commencement in towns was 10.7 years compared with 9.9 years in country areas. The suggestion that housewifery was the most suitable occupation for young girls in rural areas appeared reasonable. Young children apprenticed in these trades were most common in rural areas, although they were also found in urban areas where genuine craft apprenticeships were available. Glovemaking, nailmaking, tailoring and carpet weaving were all trades with an element of skill and very young children were not considered suitable for such apprenticeships. For this reason the mean age of commencement in these trades was about eleven years old. Craft apprenticeships were different in type from husbandry and housewifery apprenticeships.

Figure 2.8 graphically presents the age at commencement of apprenticeship related to the date when the child was apprenticed.

FIGURE 2.8. Age of Commencement of Apprenticeship and Date of Apprenticeship.

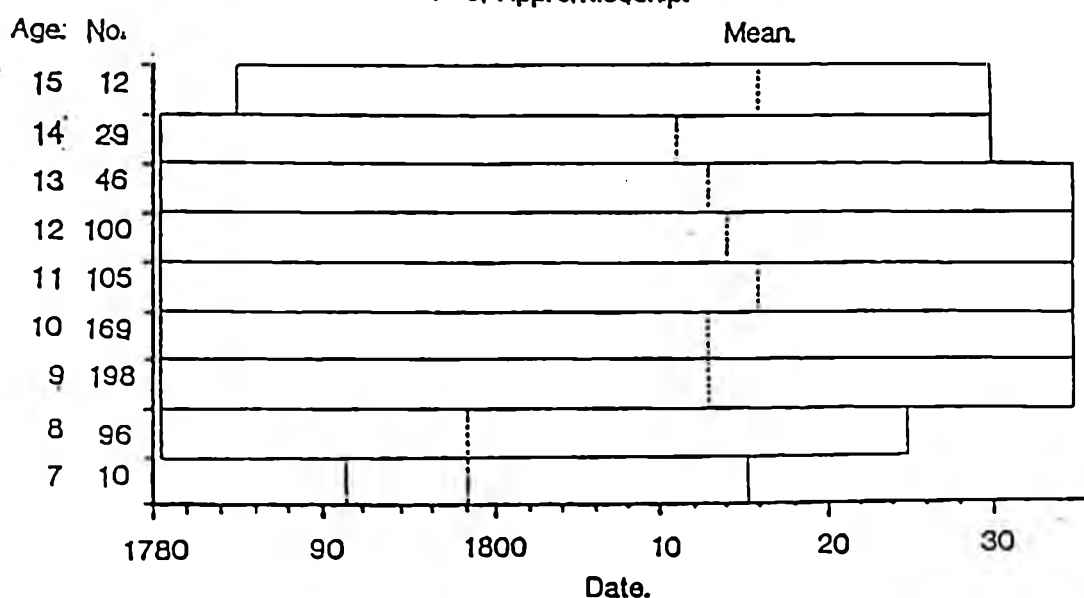
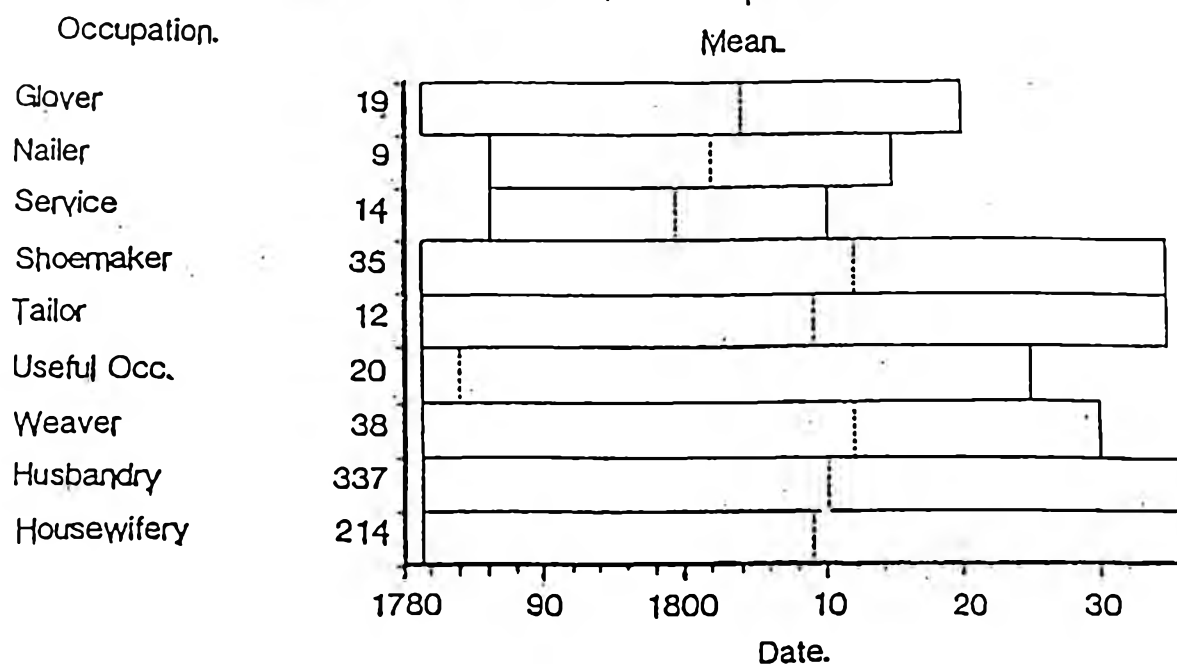


Figure 2.9 illustrates the date at which apprenticeships were commenced in various occupations. 1780 was chosen arbitrarily as the date for beginning this part of the study of parish apprenticeship. Some occupations ceased recruiting apprentices earlier than other trades, probably because some industries became mechanised and the need for parish apprentices disappeared. "Service" began to be used as a description instead of "housewifery" in urban areas, such as Worcester and Kidderminster, although the work involved in both



FIGURE 2.9. Date of Commencement of Apprenticeship  
for Various Occupations.



occupations appeared to be similar. Carpet weaving, as has already been suggested, became centralised in factories from 1820 onwards, although previously it had been a cottage industry. This change led to an alteration in the mode of apprenticing as carpet weavers, who had previously employed their own apprentices (possibly parish apprentices), ceased to be regarded as suitable masters by parish authorities. Only carpet manufacturers, now the employers of the carpet weavers, could accept apprentices and the records suggest that they no longer took parish apprentices. Recruitment to the carpet industry was from Kidderminster families already involved in the trade.

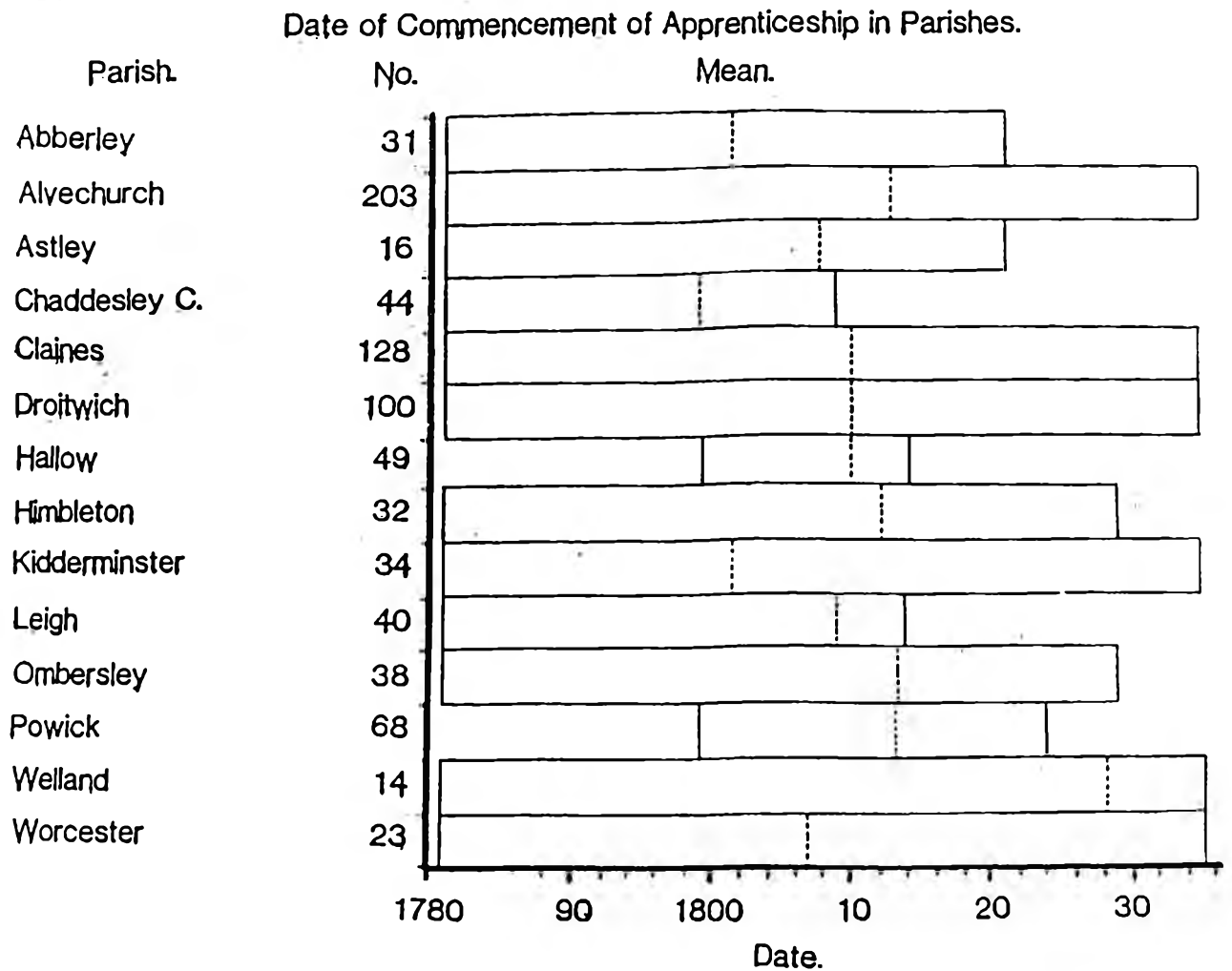
Such families had a good income, as the weavers in the

new carpet mills were well paid and they were unlikely to become pauperised. The term "useful occupation" was used at Chaddesley Corbett and Alvechurch as occupational descriptions, most commonly in the period 1781 to 1800. This was probably a means of avoiding leaving the occupational description on the apprenticeship indenture blank.

Figure 2.10 indicates the dates at which apprenticeships were commenced in various parishes. In some parishes, such as Hallow and Powick, there was no apprenticeship before 1800, but there was no evidence available to suggest a reason for this. Generally rural parishes stopped apprenticing children earlier than urban parishes possibly because the need for apprenticeship disappeared in rural places which became depopulated and which had an ageing population. There were simply no children to be apprenticed. In towns the need for apprenticeship continued.

Generally rural parishes apprenticed to masters inside the home parish more than did urban parishes. Hallow as a semi-rural parish much influenced by Worcester was an exception as 26% of its apprenticeships were to masters outside the parish. The fact that Hallow paid a fee with its apprentices after 1808 probably made apprentices from the parish relatively more attractive. The position of the mean date of apprenticeship for Hallow indicated

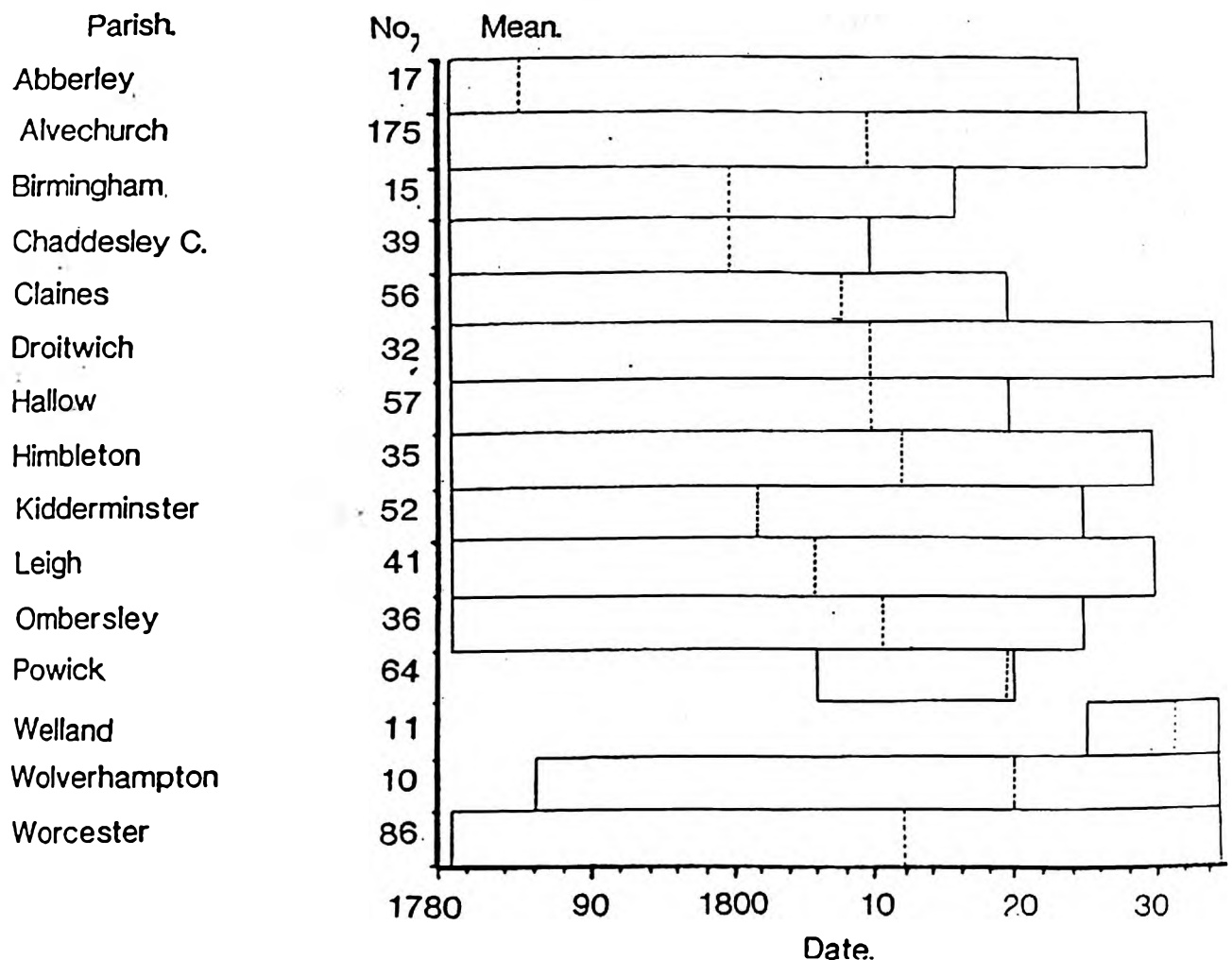
FIGURE 2.10.



an increasing number of apprenticeships later in the period under study, and around two-thirds of apprenticeships in Hallow were after 1808.

Figure 2.11 investigates the date at which various parishes were willing to accept apprentices as opposed to when parishes sought to apprentice children (described in Figure 2.10). Birmingham and Wolverhampton

FIGURE 2.11. Dates of Commencement of Apprenticeship  
in Accepting Parishes.



were included because in spite of the fact that neither were in Worcestershire they provided apprenticeships for children from county parishes. Children apprenticed outside the county tended to be apprenticed in Staffordshire and Warwickshire, and apprenticeship indentures were exchanged at the King's Head public house at Alcester Lane's End in King's Norton parish on the county boundary. Children apprenticed in this way

were usually moving over twenty miles from home, and duplicate copies of indentures were required. One indenture was kept by the apprenticing parish, the other by the parish accepting the apprentice, and some such indentures are still extant. Powick was late in adopting apprenticeship and the mean date of apprenticeship there was in the period 1810 to 1820. 89% of all apprenticeships in the parish were in the period 1817 to 1820 at a time when there was no economic crisis in the area and when real wages were more or less constant. It was difficult to understand why Powick parish suddenly apprenticed over fifty pauper children. Kidderminster's curtailment of apprenticing in 1825 was on the other hand explicable in terms of changes in the methods of production in the carpet industry. As the industry became more centralised and mechanised the demand for parish apprentices fell. This also caused a fall in the size of the population of Kidderminster.

Table 2.9 indicates the fees paid by parish authorities to employers to take pauper apprentices. The Table differentiates between males and females. The mean fee paid for male apprentices was £4 -4 -6d, compared with £2-18-10d for female apprentices. If the fees for Hallow are discounted the average was £5 -0 -3d for males and £4 -8-10d for females. This was expected because women were generally paid less than men in nineteenth century society.

The order obtained when the mean fee paid to apprentice children in various occupations was calculated was unexpected. These are presented as Table 2.10. The average fee paid for husbandry apprentices was surprising as was the fee paid for housewifery

TABLE 2.9.

Fees Paid with Parish Apprentices 1780 to 1834.

AMOUNT.				NUMBER.		
£	s	d		M	F	T
1	10	0		24	28	52
2	0	0		1	0	1
2	10	0		2	0	2
3	0	0		2	0	2
3	3	0		2	1	3
4	0	0		24	11	35
4	4	0		22	7	29
5	0	0		14	5	19
5	4	0		1	0	1
5	5	0		1	0	1
5	10	0		2	0	2
5	15	6		1	0	1
6	0	0		1	2	3
7	10	0		2	0	2
8	8	0		1	0	1
10	0	0		1	0	1
10	1	0		1	0	1
11	5	0		1	0	1
12	12	0		1	0	1
15	15	0		2	0	2
TOTAL.				107	55	162

SOURCE: Parish Apprenticeship Indentures in various Parish Collections.

apprentices. These occupations were freely available as sources of employment and it was difficult to imagine

why a fee was necessary to gain such employment. Possibly large scale farmers and middle-class householders who would provide good employment opportunity could be attracted by an apprenticeship fee. It might therefore have been considered to the apprentice's advantage to pay a fee. Genuine craft apprenticeships attracted the largest fees and it appeared possible that the amount of fee was indicative of the prestige of the craft involved. The status of the individual to whom the apprentice was to be bound also mattered. Access to the trades of the artisan elite, particularly by paupers, had to be regulated, and apprenticeship fees did this. The largest fee paid was

TABLE 2.10.

The Mean Apprenticeship Fee Paid in Trades which Apprenticed More than 5 Individuals and a Fee was paid between 1780 and 1834.

OCCUPATION.	NUMBER. *	FEE		
		£	-s	-d
Carpet Weaver.	14	4	5	9
Glover.	8	4	6	8
Housewifery.	17	3	18	3
Husbandry.	16	5	4	7
Shoemaker.	6	4	12	4
Tailor.	6	7	5	6

\* Does not include £1-10-0 indenture fees paid by the Hallow Overseer with every parish apprentice.

SOURCE: Parish Apprenticeship Indenture in various Parish Collections.

£15-15- 0d. This fee was paid at Claines on two occasions, to enable fourteen year old boys to be apprenticed in the City of Worcester. On one occasion a boy was apprenticed to a cordwainer, on the other to a breeches maker, and these fees were of sufficient size to make these apprenticeships approximate to private apprenticeships arranged by a parent for his own offspring. A large fee had to be offered to get an older child apprenticed.

Clearly some apprentices travelled a distance from home to be apprenticed. Of the sample of apprentices only one travelled over fifty miles. He was a ten year old boy from Droitwich who was apprenticed to a glasscutter in Rotherham, Yorkshire, but most apprenticeships were within the county. 80% were within the parish of birth. Places in Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire accepted apprentices from county parishes, but only Birmingham (fifteen apprentices), Kidderminster (forty seven apprentices), King's Norton (eight girl housewifery apprentices) and Worcester (sixty six apprentices) attracted large numbers of apprentices. This was to be expected, as they were large, growing, urban centres, and they conformed to the migration patterns identified elsewhere by Redford. Worcester's apprentices from outside the City came largely from Claines (fifty four out of sixty six) which was contiguous with the City. Those migrating to other large urban places in the county came from further afield.



Table 2.11 indicates the distance migrated by male and female parish apprentices. The mean distance migrated by males, who moved from their home parish, was 4.5 miles, and for females 3.5 miles. This was to be expected, and the patterns of migration revealed for both boy and girl apprentices were broadly similar.

In conclusion, in the period before the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 workhouses were relatively uncommon in the parishes of Worcestershire, and outdoor

TABLE 2.11.

Distances Migrated by Male and Female Parish Apprentices  
1780 to 1834.

DISTANCE.	NUMBER.		
	Male.	Female.	Total.
0-5 miles.	458	287	745
6-10 miles.	52	8	60
11-15 miles.	18	14	32
16-20 miles.	38	7	45
21-25 miles.	3	1	4
26-30 miles.	2	0	2
31-35 miles.	0	0	0
36-40 miles.	0	0	0
Over 40 miles.	3	0	3
TOTAL.	574	317	891

SOURCE: Parish Apprenticeship Indentures in various  
Parish Collections.

relief was used as the means of dealing with large numbers of paupers. Children who were dependents of these paupers were also given outdoor relief, and where workhouses existed these children were inmates along with their parents. Orphaned and deserted children were given similar relief, but these methods of dealing with destitute children were unsatisfactory. This treatment was countenanced as long as pauperism was regarded as an unfortunate chance happening, but when a theory developed that pauperism was disease-like, and thus endemic and contagious, a means of sanitising society was sought. Nowhere was the need more urgent than in the treatment of children. They were seen as blameless for their plight. In Metropolitan and urban areas schemes for separate children's institutions were adopted, and in a few places "boarding out" was tried, but in Worcestershire the numbers of pauper children did not warrant these approaches. To solve the child pauper problem of the county parishes powers under the Pauper Apprenticeship Act of 1698<sup>25</sup> were invoked. Under this Act a parish could apprentice the children of paupers in need of care, and orphaned and deserted children, at parish expense. In the county the scheme operated in two forms. Individual apprenticeships were arranged with a person involved in a craft or trade, and this type of apprenticeship was analagous to private apprenticeship.

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25. 9 & 10 Will. III. c.14.

In some cases, however, the trade was not specified. Elsewhere in three rural parishes, a system of allotment of apprentices was used. In this case ratepayers were allotted an apprentice on a rota basis. This caused great resentment as the child could be a burden on the ratepayer for up to seventeen years. In three cases in Powick ratepayers considered it preferable to pay a fine of £10 to rid themselves of this burden. "Batch apprenticeships" were described by the Webbs,<sup>26</sup> and were said to exist in the carpet industry, an assumption made from Villiers' evidence to the Poor Law Inquiry Commission,<sup>27</sup> but there was no evidence that this was the case. There were certainly individual parish apprentices sent to the carpet trade in Kidderminster, but these individuals were employed in the relatively menial and unskilled task of setting up the wefts on the carpet looms. Such individuals were dismissed at the end of their quasi-apprenticeship. True apprenticeships in the carpet trade were available only for the relatives of people already engaged in the trade and this type of "internal recruitment" was also found in the glovemaking trade in Worcester. In glovemaking a few parish apprentices were accepted, but their apprenticeships were negotiated on an individual basis and a fee was paid.

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26. WEBB, S. & B., English Poor Law History, Op cit, p.210.

27. Villiers' Report, Op cit, p.8.

The allotment of apprentices was virtually enforced boarding out or even fostering. It was only practiced in a few rural parishes and in these cases apprenticeship indentures were issued. It appeared that this was the only way that the arrangement approximated to other forms of apprenticeship. The occupation of the person to whom the apprentice had been sent was entered as the occupational description on the indenture. As most ratepayers in rural parishes were involved in agriculture, most indentures described the apprenticeship for boys as husbandry. Girls were invariably apprenticed in housewifery.

Boys outnumbered girls as parish apprentices, but there was no uniform pattern of apprenticing and the size of parish did not apparently determine the numbers of children apprenticed, or the proportion of boys to girls. The nature of the parish and its wealth were probably the most important factors in determining how many pauper children were apprenticed. It thus appeared that impecunious semi-rural parishes within relatively easy reach of urban centres, where apprenticeship opportunities were plentiful, apprenticed most children. In isolated rural parishes husbandry was the most common source of male apprenticeships and housewifery supplied most female apprenticeships. In urban parishes carpet weaving, shoemaking and tailoring were the most common occupations accepting male apprentices. Service (the

urban equivalent of housewifery) and glovemaking accepted most female apprentices.

It was clearly economic circumstances that were crucial in determining the numbers of apprenticings and this was inevitably related to the demand for outdoor relief. Only children who were in need of care, or whose parents were in receipt of outdoor relief, were eligible to become parish apprentices and the number of children apprenticed was in direct proportion to the cost of living index. This index applied at both national and local levels and the tendency applied to both boy and girl apprentices, in spite of the fact that female apprenticeship numbers were eroded by the ease with which domestic employment could be obtained in all places.

In spite of the legal position, which enabled children as young as seven years old to be apprenticed, few parishes apprenticed children that young. In most parishes apprenticeships began when the child was between eight and twelve years old. Ten years old was the modal age. Only between 1798 and 1804, when there was a severe economic crisis, were young children habitually bound apprentice. Cost of living reached a peak in 1801 and this coincided with the maximum number of eight year olds being apprenticed. This was most obvious in rural areas

where most children were apprenticed to husbandry and housewifery, which had low levels of skill involved. Craft apprenticeships demanded greater skills and were not available to young apprentices.

Of the occupations accepting apprentices only nailmaking began to recruit after 1800. This was in the Bromsgrove area and appeared to be a response to economic distress. Production rates were pushed upwards by employing pauper apprentice labour which was virtually free. Elsewhere carpet weaving and glovemaking ceased to apprentice paupers in the early 1820's when the trades became mechanised. The effect of economic crises on apprenticing was most apparent in rural parishes. In such parishes apprenticing was sporadic and clustered around such crisis points. This would for instance explain the sudden involvement of Welland in apprenticing in the late 1820's. The willingness of urban places to accept apprentices was also related to the economic climate prevailing, but the size of the Birmingham conurbation (including the Black Country), Kidderminster and Worcester meant that their demand for apprentices was relatively constant between 1781 and 1834. These places acted as magnets for migration of labour including apprentices. Only in a minority of cases was it necessary for fees to be offered with parish apprentices. Such fees varied between £1-10 -0d and £15-15 -0d., and tended to be paid to obtain craft

apprenticeships, where a high skill element was involved. This meant that the apprentices' future prospects were more assured. Parish apprentices were relatively immobile as most apprenticeships were in the child's parish of origin. Where they did move the average distance was four and a half miles for boy apprentices and three and a half miles for girls. One must agree with Oxley that whilst Overseers of the Poor could be criticised for sending apprentices to unsuitable masters; "Equality of opportunity (with non pauper children) was unheard of as a concept or slogan", and thus "parish apprentices with limited funds behind them tended to find themselves in the least attractive occupations" but; "It might also be added that they were perhaps the least attractive apprentices".<sup>28</sup>

This chapter has investigated apprenticeship as an aspect of the treatment of pauper children in the fifty years before the Act that was to abolish parish apprenticeship as a means of dealing with pauper children. The type of children described in this chapter were thus to be dealt with differently after the Act, but most importantly the type of child now to be maintained and treated in workhouses, after the Act, has been identified.

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28. OXLEY, Op cit, p. 76.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### THE TREATMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE WORKHOUSES OF WORCESTERSHIRE 1834 TO 1871.

##### i. The Principles of Treatment.

Under the Old Poor Law children were given outdoor relief and were liable to be apprenticed as "parish poor children". Under the New Poor Law such children were liable to be found in the workhouses. They were regarded as their parents' responsibility and were admitted to the workhouse with their parents. Treatment was determined by the rules and regulations of the Poor Law Commission, but local interpretation of policy varied considerably. An image develops of the relationship between the bureaucracy and its clientele the children. We cannot reconstruct what life was like for an individual child in a particular workhouse on a specific day, but an enduring impression of conditions and treatment can be obtained. The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act<sup>1</sup> made the Poor Law Commission responsible for administering the Poor Law in three hundred and ninety six Unions.<sup>2</sup> The Commission was described by Halevy as the "Somerset House dictators"<sup>3</sup> which appeared appropriate given the power they had. Originally regulations had been inflexible, but the Poor Law Authority's correspondence was full of reinterpretations of policy which constantly

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1. 4 & 5 Will. IV. c.76

2. Unions were not created in parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire.

3. HALEVY, E., The Age of Peel and Cobden, 1970. p.145.



altered the situation and created local differences. The Poor Law Commission eventually became unequal to its task, not in the sense of personal inadequacy, but in the sense that by 1847 the bureaucracy had outgrown its administration and Gash's comment about the Poor Law Commission in 1834, that it was "primarily concerned with the administrative structure rather than the policy it was to administer,"<sup>4</sup> was even more true. Replacement was inevitable.

The "Principle of National Uniformity" in which all paupers were to be treated equally was introduced in 1834, but by 1847 the treatment of children and aged paupers was radically different from that of able-bodied adult paupers of both sexes. The definition of pauper for these two groups had thus been radically altered and Himmelfarb's notion, that the nature of poverty was thus changed, appeared to apply. In the north there was a resistance to the New Poor Law and in some places it remained unimplemented, but the Worcestershire Unions apart from Dudley complied with the law. At Dudley a version of the law acceptable to the local Guardians had been applied. Some of the principles on which the law was based proved unworkable particularly in dealing with children. There resulted a constant flow of Orders and Regulations to remedy this. Flexibility was necessary to

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4. GASH, N., Aristocracy and People, Arnold, 1979. p.195.

cope with the various needs of unions, but "National Uniformity" hampered this and was eventually abandoned for all but able bodied male paupers, although even then some discretion was allowed. By the 1850's in the majority of unions outdoor relief for the able bodied had been abolished<sup>5</sup> apart from in the most exceptional circumstances, for instance during periods of severe frost in parishes bordering the River Severn where watermen were laid off for considerable periods. To give outdoor relief was sensible, because otherwise the workhouses became overcrowded, but it was practicality rather than compassion that led to this decision by the Guardians.

The Report of 1834 largely ignored children and the Webbs stated "apart from apprenticeship the Report deals only incidentally with children. It assumes throughout that the children go with their parents".<sup>6</sup> Thus some individuals entering the workhouse brought their children with them. There were roughly twice as many children on outdoor relief as in the workhouses, but their condition was undocumented. Large numbers of dependent children in the workhouse had been expected and to some extent planned for. Such children were to be placed in separate institutions and were to be given

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5. POOR LAW COMMISSION ORDER, 10th. December 1852 theoretically abolished Outdoor Relief. This occurred in 396 of the 538 unions.

6. WEBB, S. and B., English Poor Law Policy, Cass, 1910, p.7.

special treatment including education "....by a person properly qualified to act as a schoolmaster".<sup>7</sup> The Amendment Act considered that children should not be exposed to the atmosphere of the general workhouse. The various classes of pauper were to be segregated, but this decision appears to have been based on morality rather than on practical considerations. In Worcestershire large general workhouses existed, administered by one set of officers. The workhouse master was responsible for all inmates and he determined the behaviour of his subordinate officers including the schoolmaster and schoolmistress. The special needs of the children were thus effectively ignored.

The intention was that; "Each class might thus receive an appropriate treatment; the old may enjoy their indulgencies without torment from the boisterous; the children to be educated, the able bodied to be subjected to such course of labour and discipline as will repel the indolent and the vicious",<sup>8</sup> but in many cases in Worcestershire old workhouses were used to house paupers under the New Poor Law. Only at Dudley<sup>9</sup> were separate departmental workhouses provided - Sedgley Workhouse became the Childrens' Department. At Dudley, children were tolerated in the general workhouse for three or four weeks

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7. THE POOR LAW REPORT OF 1834, (eds. CHECKLAND, S.G. and E.O.A.) Penguin, 1974. p.430.

8. THE POOR LAW REPORT OF 1834, *ibid*, p.430.

9. Dudley Union was formed by the amalgamation of four parishes each with its own workhouse.

and then transferred to Sedgley. This system endured until a new workhouse was built in 1858. In most workhouses the treatment of children was inappropriate.

In 1834 the intention was to maintain "National Uniformity" and "Less Eligibility" for all classes of pauper and it was stated in the Report "his (the pauper's) situation on the whole shall not be made really or apparently so eligible as the situation of the independent labourer of the lowest class"<sup>10</sup> explaining that the rationale for this was that "as the condition of any pauper class is elevated above the condition of the independent labourers, the condition of the independent class is depressed; their industry impaired, their employment becomes unsteady, and its remuneration in wages diminished. Such persons, therefore, are under the strongest inducement to quit the less eligible class of labourers and enter the more eligible class of paupers."<sup>11</sup> The reverse proposition was also true, because; "Every penny bestowed that renders the condition of the pauper more eligible than that of the independent labourer, is a bounty on indolence and vice." Bentham's utilitarian philosophy was clearly the progenitor of this aspect of Poor Law Policy and Himmelfarb's thesis,<sup>12</sup> that morality initially lay at

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10. THE POOR LAW REPORT OF 1834. Op. cit. p.335.

11. THE POOR LAW REPORT OF 1834. Op. cit. p.336.

12. HIMMELFARB, H., The Idea of Poverty in England in the Early Industrial Revolution, Faber, 1984.

the base of all Poor Law Policy, appears reasonable. The workhouse with its provision for less eligible treatment was seen as a disincentive to pauperism. By 1847 "Less Eligibility" had come to be achieved by a regime of confinement in the workhouse where life was monotonous and the inmates, including children, were given menial and degrading tasks to perform to impress on them their degraded condition, probably hastening the child's institutionalisation. The pauper child inmates lived in this atmosphere, but it was stated in the House of Commons in 1848; "Too many of those brought up in the workhouse were marked by a tendency to regard the workhouse as their natural home. They had been accustomed to the workhouse from early infancy....and when they were adults there was nothing to deter them from entering it."<sup>13</sup> This concerned some Members of Parliament because hereditary pauperism was greatly feared and considered endemic in the workhouses at this time. Thus some action was demanded.

Support for "Less Eligibility" initially continued in the Poor Law Commission and the Orders, Regulations and Circulars were intended to maintain the principle, but the demise of Chadwick's influence after about 1841, in what Finer, Chadwick's biographer, called "dropping the pilot",<sup>14</sup> led to a reduced emphasis on this aspect.

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13. HANSARD, 6th. August 1848. Vol. 100. p.1217. Speech by Charles Butler.

14. FINER, S.E., The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick, 1952, p.193.

Significantly Finer used Tenniel's phrase<sup>15</sup> in relation to Chadwick's influence on the Poor Law Board between 1834 and 1847. Chadwick lost his "personal battle" with George Cornwall Lewis, one of three Poor Law Commissioners, in 1841. The other two were Sir George Nicholls and Sir Edmund Head. Chadwick's utilitarianism<sup>16</sup> was behind the rigid adherence to "Less Eligibility", but as Finer stated Chadwick "withdrew from Poor Law affairs completely"<sup>17</sup> after 1841. Ironically it was the Andover Workhouse scandal of 1845, where paupers were definitely treated "less eligibly", that influenced public opinion and temporarily reinstated Chadwick's influence. This should have led to the decline of Lewis's influence, but his family connections and the influence of his friends saved him. Thus Chadwick, the so called victor,<sup>18</sup> again lost influence. Emphasis on "Less Eligibility" was reduced after this and the Poor Law Board Act of 1847<sup>19</sup> confirmed this. Before this the Poor Law Commission Orders and Regulations were based on utilitarian principles, when they insisted that children were treated "less eligibly". Some Guardians such as those at Martley,<sup>20</sup> interpreted these literally, insisting on no

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15. FINER, *ibid.* p.193. Tenniel's reference was to Bismarck.

16. Chadwick had been Bentham's Secretary and was much influenced by him.

17. FINER, *Op. cit.* p.207.

18. FINER, *ibid.* pp.274-91.

19. 10 & 11 Vict. c.110.

20. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. January 1846. P.R.O. MH12. 14081. This case is cited at greater length in Chapter 6 on education.

erosion of the principle and refusing to implement these orders and regulations. Other Guardians adhered to what the Webbs referred to as "supplying whatever is necessary"<sup>21</sup> and they sometimes contravened Orders. After 1848 there was no demand for the continuance of the principle in relation to children, but it still applied to able bodied adults.

#### ii. The Separation of Children.

In undifferentiated general workhouses children were exposed to the same regime as adult paupers to dissuade them from a life of indolence and mendicancy, but paupers were kept in what Cole and Postgate have described as "sluggish sensual indolence."<sup>22</sup> Segregation was maintained as essential to preventing contamination of the young, because the adult wards were presumed contaminated by mendicancy. Segregation was thought to prevent its spread. Children were segregated by sex and a Regulation of 1848 stated; "This separation must be entire and absolute between the sexes, who are to live, sleep and take their meals in totally separate parts of the building, with an enclosed yard for each."<sup>23</sup> Infants were treated as a separate class and "they are to be kept by their mothers until they are of an age to receive instruction, when they are to be sent to school." After 1836 children were classified on the

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21. WEBB, English Poor Law Policy, Op. cit. p.88.

22. COLE, G.D.H. AND POSTGATE, R., The British Common People, Methuen, 1961. p.277.

23. POOR LAW BOARD, Order 1848. 1st. ANNUAL REPORT, 1848. P.R.O. ZHCl. 1806.

basis of:

1. Boys between 7 and 13 years.
2. Girls between 7 and 16 years.
3. Children under 7 years old.<sup>24</sup>

This system was logically a legitimization of the existing situation in Worcestershire workhouses. The classification ages of boys and girls varied, probably because boys obtained employment more easily than girls. The presence of unchaste women, such as known prostitutes, in the workhouse also meant that girls of thirteen or less in the general wards would be contaminated by these undesirables and keeping pubescent girls apart from such women was seen as essential. Boys between thirteen and sixteen years residing in the adult male wards were apparently seen by contemporary opinion as in no comparable danger. The Guardians of Droitwich did not approve of the officially recommended treatment of infants. In 1837 they stated; "This Board does not think it right either to compel the separation of children from their mothers before the age of seven years, or to offer the workhouse to mothers, themselves not being paupers - while on the other hand the Board consider it highly inexpedient to accord to all such children on application for relief, an indiscriminate payment of eighteen pence".<sup>25</sup> The classification system was not

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24. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Consolidated Order, 7th. March 1836. 2nd. ANNUAL REPORT, 1836. H.L.L.

25. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. April 1837, P.R.O. MH12. 13930. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 1(i).



seen as satisfactory, and was revised in 1838 to:

1. Boys between 7 and 15 years.
2. Girls between 7 and 15 years.
3. Children under 7 years old.

This system of classification was not adopted in Worcester Union until 1840,<sup>27</sup> because good employment prospects in the Worcester area made it unnecessary. The treatment of children depended on their age and health and sickly children were treated discriminatorily. Initially the system was strict, rigid and unchanging, and segregation was complete, but communication between classes was still possible. At Pershore in 1837<sup>28</sup> there was communication over the walls of the yard and the height of the walls was raised by two feet to prevent this. Elsewhere costly alterations were made preventing communication. At Kidderminster in 1846, "The Visiting Committee recorded that in consequence of the entrance to the vagrants' ward opening into the boys' yard and thus affording a means of communication between the vagrants and the boys they recommended that the doors and windows should be removed to the opposite side, opening into the garden, and also that the privy be divided and the door put on the garden side".<sup>29</sup> The old

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26. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Consolidated Order, 1838. 5th. ANNUAL REPORT, p.76. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1249/1295.

27. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 29th. December 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14203.

28. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. May 1837. P.R.O. MH12. 14104. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 1.

29. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. July 1846. P.R.O. MH12. 14018. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc.403. Par. 6.

workhouses became progressively overused and their size and general layout was based on outdated ideas. Hard winters threw men out of work and workhouses filled, so that sometimes outdoor relief was used to alleviate this situation, and the Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission in 1847<sup>30</sup> stated that Worcester Workhouse was full during the winter months. Outdoor relief had been adopted for this reason. In a pragmatic decision in 1842<sup>31</sup> the Poor Law Commission allowed unions to classify children over ten years of age in any way they chose, so as to reduce overcrowding. This ran contrary to the Commission's professed belief and the decision was reversed in 1847.<sup>32</sup> In Bromsgrove Workhouse it was often necessary to alleviate overcrowding and a temporary workhouse was opened when necessary. Had the Commission's 1842 Regulation continued Bromsgrove would not have needed to use the measure. The Commission reversed their decision at the soonest possible moment probably because of their continuing belief in the contagious nature of mendicancy. The workhouse was to be, in Sir George Nicolls's words "as disagreeable as was consistent with health".<sup>33</sup>

In 1851 George Cornewall Lewis asserted to Sir Edmund

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30. POOR LAW COMMISSION, 13th. ANNUAL REPORT, 1847. P.R.O. ZHCl. 1748.

31. POOR LAW COMMISSION, General Order, 5th. February 1842. 8th. ANNUAL REPORT, 1842. P.R.O. ZHCl. 1386.

32. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Consolidated Order, 24th. July 1847. 13th. ANNUAL REPORT, 1847. P.R.O. ZHCl. 1748.

33. Sir George Nicholls. Quoted in COLE and POSTGATE. Op. cit. p.274.

Head, that the Poor Law Board had become "purely administrative, and had no character or policy of its own."<sup>34</sup> Administration and policy were now determined outside the Poor Law Board which was now accountable to parliament as it had a Minister. The administration was still preoccupied with the segregation of classes of pauper and children in the workhouse were now regarded as blameless for their predicament. New workhouses were designed so that communication was impossible, but of the county unions, only Dudley built a new workhouse which was completed in 1858.<sup>35</sup> In spite of the diligent application of separation rules by workhouse officers, communication between children and adult paupers continued to happen. By 1870 the situation was sufficiently improved to allow the authorities to concentrate on minute details such as the composition of the asphalt used to surface yards, and the height of workhouse walls ensuring that workhouses were "slightly less prison like"<sup>36</sup> although they continued to be "closed institutions". Conditions for individual paupers improved and children gained additional facilities for play and recreation as well as additional industrial training workshops.

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34. Letter from Lord George Cornwall Lewis (Poor Law Commissioner) to Sir Edmund Head. 6th. November 1851. Sir Edmund Head was Secretary to the Poor Law Board. Cited by WEBB, English Poor Law Policy, Op. cit. p.86.

35. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. May 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 13964. D.P.L. A251.

36. POOR LAW BOARD, Circular, 6th. July 1868. 21st. ANNUAL REPORT, 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 3303.

The creation in 1847 of the Poor Law Board caused little change in the mode of administration, as classification remained unaltered and paupers under the age of sixteen years were still classified as children, which was in stark contrast to the situation outside the workhouses where 16 year olds would have been employed for over five years by that age. In workhouses children were divided into; "infants" under two years of age, children between two and nine years of age, and those between nine and sixteen years old as laid down in the final Consolidated Order of the Commission in 1847.<sup>37</sup> Strict segregation continued, although separate childrens' institutions were not created in the county, and the general workhouse continued to be used to accommodate children even though the mere sight of an adult pauper was considered detrimental to them. A separate Childrens' Department continued at Dudley. At Droitwich Workhouse in 1848, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner J.T. Graves<sup>38</sup> drew the Guardians' attention to the possibility of the girls seeing into the female vagrants' ward and the windows were later equipped with shades to prevent this. J.C. Symons,<sup>39</sup> responsible for inspecting workhouse schools, re-emphasised the need for complete separation

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37. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Consolidated Order, 24th. July 1847. Op. cit.

38. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. July 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 13933. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 4.

39. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. August 1848, P.R.O. MH12. 13933. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 4.

3 months later.<sup>40</sup> One official, apparently, reinforced the opinion of another national official and marginal comments on the Poor Law Board's copy of the minutes indicated that this was planned and concurrence of opinion was thus ensured. Within a week of Symon's visit J.T. Graves revisited the union, and because it was autumn he found the workhouse filled with paupers. The workhouse was clearly inadequate, as boys were accommodated with the able bodied men, because the boys' wards were full. He stated that this was "detrimental to the morals of the children so placed", so that the Visiting Committee investigated and reported that, "the present store room (was) to be thrown into the boys' sleeping room, which will give an increase of five beds. The one half of the men's infirm ward be converted into a store room".<sup>41</sup> The proposal was immediately adopted. At Worcester in 1855 J.C. Symons found irregularities, which he drew J.T. Graves's attention to, because; "The rules affecting the classification of girls....proved very imperfect for their separation from depraved adults of their own sex".<sup>42</sup> The Guardians' response was that they always attempted to improve classification "knowing how essential it was to keeping the necessary discipline of

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40. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. October 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 13933. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 4.

41. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 17th. October 1849. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 4.

42. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. August 1855. P.R.O. MH12. 14208.

the workhouse."<sup>43</sup> They suggested that if the existing workhouse could be sold to the War Department as a barracks they would build a new workhouse, but the War Department refused to purchase the workhouse and no new workhouse was built. This idea was a convenient prevarication, but the problem did not disappear and as late as 1869<sup>44</sup> complaints that the girls at Worcester Workhouse communicated with adult women continued. Similar problems were reported at Shipston-on-Stour Workhouse in 1862<sup>45</sup> where communication between children and adult paupers occurred and it was decided in January 1863<sup>46</sup> to alter the workhouse to ensure complete segregation. Such segregation undoubtedly enhanced the "total institution" and ensured the institutionalisation of long-stay inmates. Nowhere else were separation rules contravened probably because of the workhouse officers' diligence in preventing communication between children and adults.

The influence of immoral females was considered most dangerous to girl paupers and unchaste women were thought most dangerous of all as sources of moral infection. The mothering of a bastard was considered a sure sign of such immorality, but interestingly the

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43. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. September 1855. P.R.O. MH12. 14208.

44. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. February 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 14211.

45. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. December 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 14122.

46. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. January 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14122.

bastard in the isolation of the children's ward was not discriminated against. The influence of unchaste women was sometimes direct as in the case of a girl called Isabella Robinson aged fourteen years at Kidderminster in 1847 who had been "induced to leave the workhouse on Holy Thursday Fair Day last, with a girl named Braggington, by whom she was taken to a house of ill fame, kept by a person called Taylor in Blackwell Street".<sup>47</sup> There she "had connexion with twenty different men, and had contracted venereal disease". The proceeds of her prostitution were taken from her by Braggington and the person who kept the house, which was regarded as exploitation of the child as well as destruction of her morals. The keeper of the brothel and Braggington were successfully prosecuted. The workhouse sometimes dealt with girls corrupted before they entered the workhouse, as in 1865 at Martley, when a girl called Emma Hinton was described as "very forward in disposition, and likely, if left without proper restraint to turn out badly".<sup>48</sup> The Guardians wished to send her to an institution,<sup>49</sup> but the Poor Law Board refused because

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47. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. May 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 6.

48. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. May 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14089. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 406. Par. 2. The Guardians wanted to send her to a home, at West Wanstead, run by The London Society for the Protection of Young Females and the Prevention of Juvenile Prostitution.

49. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. June 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14089. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 406. Par. 2.

the chosen institution was not "certified."<sup>50</sup> The Guardians regarded this case as a peculiar one,<sup>51</sup> but the Poor Law Board did not and they refused payment of the fees. A similar decision was made at Upton-on-Severn in 1861<sup>52</sup> when the Guardians there wanted to send a child to an institution in London, but the institution was said not to be certified. This sort of decision protected the child from being sent to an unsuitable place, but arguably it was best explained by the Poor Law Board simply wanting to save money. Sometimes a local benefactor paid such fees. At Shipston-on-Stour in 1859<sup>53</sup> a mother left her child in the workhouse and entered a reformatory in London<sup>54</sup> at the expense of a local benefactress. The number of immoral girls was always small and was no doubt overemphasised because of the Victorian preoccupation with overt morality. There were few cases of venereal disease amongst the adolescent girls in, or entering, the county workhouses. Apart from Robinson<sup>55</sup> there was only one other case. At Kidderminster in 1857,<sup>56</sup> an unnamed girl was sent to the

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50. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 17th. June 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14089. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 406. Par. 2. The home was not Certified under the Certified Schools' Act of 1862 - 25 & 26 Vict. c.43.

51. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. June 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14089. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 406. Par. 2.

52. UPTON-ON-SEVERN BOARD OF GUARDIANS, 2nd April 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 14187. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. PAR. 7.

53. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 16th. November 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14121.

54. She went to The London Penitentiary for the Reform of Unfortunate Women.

55. See Note 43. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, 25th. May 1847. Op. cit.

56. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. May 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 11.



infectious diseases' ward immediately on entry so that she did not infect other girls with the disease, but even more importantly so she did not infect them morally.

"The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Emmeline Way"<sup>57</sup> expressed the view that girls be kept "away from women of bad character"<sup>58</sup> when she visited Martley workhouse in 1853. She expressed a similar view in her evidence to the Select Committee on Poor Relief in 1861.<sup>59</sup> Her views were based on thirteen years of workhouse visiting as a founder member of the Workhouse Visiting Society, a branch of the National Society for the Promotion of Social Science, which attempted to encourage an objective approach. The Workhouse Visiting Society produced material that was far from objective, however, and its Journal articles<sup>60</sup> related not so much to the treatment of paupers as to middle-class attitudes towards their treatment. They dealt particularly with the treatment of children and the journal was paternalistic and patronising. For instance an article entitled "Christmas Day in the Workhouse" published in 1859, Roberts's

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57. This title must have been incorrect. She was probably the Hon. Mrs. Way.

58. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. July 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14088. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 406. Par. 1.

59. SELECT COMMITTEE ON POOR RELIEF, 1861, REPRINTS OF BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS, Irish Universities Press, 1970. Vol. 25. "Poor Law". pp.662-671.

60., WORKHOUSE VISITING SOCIETY JOURNAL, 1859 to 1865. BOD.

article "A Plea for Workhouse Children" published in 1861, and "A Railway Trip for Workhouse Children" published in 1863<sup>61</sup> were particularly paternalistic. The Workhouse Visiting Society encouraged the middle classes, and if possible the upper classes, to visit workhouses, because it was believed that such contacts would have a miraculous curative effect. Only at Bromsgrove in 1858<sup>62</sup> did the Chaplain recruit "respectable ladies" to visit the workhouse and such visits continued until after 1871. In 1859 new regulations for these visits were introduced by the Chaplain. All visits had to be sanctioned by the Guardians and the lady visitor was "to read and converse with any of the inmates in the hospital, or those not at work, to interest herself in the school, and if she got an opportunity, to seek situations for the inmates of the house, particularly the children, when they were old enough."<sup>63</sup> She was also requested "not to listen to, or mention complaints from any of the inmates, or to interfere in any manner with the management and discipline of the house." In 1861 these rules were again made stricter and the lady visitor was not to converse with adult inmates and "to confine her attention to the

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61. WORKHOUSE VISITING SOCIETY JOURNAL, Respectively: January 1859, Vol.i, pp.25-73, November 1861, Vol.xvi, pp.518-20, and October 1863, Vol.xxvii, pp.128-9.

62. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. July 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 13911. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

63. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 27th. December 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 13911. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

school and to do what she may for its benefit".<sup>64</sup> Later in 1861 the Bromsgrove Guardians' had their attentions drawn to the Annual Conference of the Workhouse Visiting Society, although no-one attended it. In 1865 at Bromsgrove<sup>65</sup> the workhouse was honoured with a visit from Baroness Windsor. The purpose of her visit was not clear, but her presence was seen by the Guardians as enormously beneficial.

Soon after the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 there were many children in the county workhouses. By 1836 a Special Report<sup>66</sup> reviewed the working of the Act and a census of inmates was conducted. There were 42,000 children under sixteen years old in the nations' workhouses or 43.9% of the workhouse population. By 1840 this figure was 68,000 of whom 88% were above the infant class, but not every workhouse was overcrowded with children. At Tenbury Wells in 1844 the Guardians ordered "that the clerk do communicate with the Poor Law Commissioners as to the propriety of removing the

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64. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. August 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13911. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

65. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. October 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7. The visit took place on 29th. October 1865.

66. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Special Report on the Further Amendment of the Poor Laws, 1836. 2nd. ANNUAL REPORT, 1836. H.L.L.

schoolmistress from the workhouse, it being the opinion of this Board that it is not necessary she should continue in her situation owing to the small number of children now, and likely to be in the future in the workhouse of sufficient age to receive instruction".<sup>67</sup> Elsewhere in the county overcrowding led to discussion of a District School. In 1841<sup>68</sup> a survey of orphan paupers in the three counties of Worcester, Hereford and Gloucester revealed three hundred and seventy seven boys and three hundred and thirty eight girls in the workhouse and a further seventy three boys and twelve girls in prisons. It was thought there was need for special provision. In 1842 Stourbridge<sup>69</sup> had received 2,057 children into the workhouse and Worcester workhouse on 26th. September 1842<sup>70</sup> contained sixty four boys and sixty six girls (39.5% of inmates) together with sixteen infants. The numbers fluctuated wildly but invariably there were fewer inmates in the Spring and Summer. In June 1845<sup>71</sup> there were forty five child inmates in Worcester Workhouse compared with one hundred and thirty three in March 1847.<sup>72</sup> In spite of this the majority of children in Poor Law care in the county were in workhouses, although

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67. TENBURY WELLS BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. October 1844. P.R.O. MH12. 14170. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 413. Par. 3.

68. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. July 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 14203.

69. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. May 1842. P.R.O. MH12. 14135.

70. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. September 1842. P.R.O. MH12. 14203.

71. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. June 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14204.

72. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIAN, Minutes, 20th. March 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14205.

this was considered injurious to the interests of these children, who according to the Poor Law Commission's policy should have been in a District School.

In spite of recriminations against unchaste women, including at one stage the wearing of a distinctive garb,<sup>73</sup> pregnant unmarried women found the workhouse the most acceptable of the alternatives available for their confinements at childbirth. The alternative was confinement outside the workhouse without medical aid, but this was extremely hazardous. Workhouse births accentuated the problem of infants in the workhouses. Such young infants would clearly cause problems, but the 1834 Act made no provision for them and the Commission made the obvious decision soon after the Act that mothers with children at their breast be allowed regular and constant contact with their offspring. Guardians were given discretion over this matter and by 1836 access was said to be allowed "at all reasonable times".<sup>74</sup> The Guardians' power to do this was reaffirmed in 1842<sup>75</sup> and again in 1847.<sup>76</sup> The Order of 1842<sup>77</sup> allowed a mother and her child, not yet weaned, to

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73. The wearing of these yellow and black striped dresses was discontinued in 1840.

74. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Consolidated Order, 7th. March 1836. Op. cit.

75. POOR LAW COMMISSION, General Order, 5th. February 1842. Op. cit.

76. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Consolidated Order, 24th. July 1847. Op. cit.

77. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Consolidated Order. 5th. February 1842. Op. cit.

occupy the same bed. There was to be no contact for children over two years old, although this regulation was gradually relaxed as the problems of bringing young children under the rigid control of the workhouse disciplinary codes became apparent. Eventually children up to the age of seven years could be present in the women's wards and the problem was alleviated.<sup>78</sup> Multi-occupation of beds was normal in overcrowded workhouses and to release beds by allowing children under seven years old to share a bed with their mothers was a sensible decision. Orphaned and deserted children remained in the workhouse until they were sixteen years old, or until they were apprenticed, sent to service, or adopted. A few were sent to orphanages, some to relatives, and a few absconded. Relatives were sometimes induced to take orphaned children by being paid outdoor relief; a practice adopted in some county unions.<sup>79</sup> Older siblings most frequently took such orphans, but grandparents, and aunts and uncles also accepted them. More distant relatives were treated with suspicion lest their intention was to exploit the child and they were generally not allowed such children. The Guardians demonstrated care for the child in this situation by demanding the Relieving Officer investigate the

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78. Bed sharing by mothers and infants appeared to have only been practised in overcrowded workhouses.

79. King's Norton, Kidderminster, Pershore, Shipston on Stour and Worcester Unions allowed adoptions.

circumstances of the person applying for the child. At Shipston-on-Stour Union in 1850<sup>80</sup> a woman domestic servant, living some fifteen miles from the union, asked for the custody of her niece. She was investigated and it was only when her employer vouched for her servant and offered to supply the child with clothes that the Guardians relented. Outdoor relief did not cover the cost of keeping such a child. At Worcester in 1852<sup>81</sup> a man applied for two nephews but he was regarded as "a bad example" and the Poor Law Board told the Guardians that they could refuse permission if they found the relative unsuitable. This they did. Shipston-on-Stour Guardians were equally careful in 1863<sup>82</sup> when they ordered the return of a seven year old from her cousin's home in London, because she was too far away to be regularly inspected by the Relieving Officer. A relative taking an orphan at Kidderminster in 1864 had to "maintain and educate the child",<sup>83</sup> but in spite of this relatives were sometimes willing to accept more than one child. At Pershore in 1860<sup>84</sup> a man accepted three of his brother's children. These arrangements saved the

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80. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. September 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 14119.

81. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 30th. January 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14207.

82. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. July 1863. P.R.O. MH12 14122.

83. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. September 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 16.

84. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. July 1860. P.R.O. MH12. 14108. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 8.

ratepayers money and were to be encouraged, but only small numbers of children were ever involved. Guardians most readily sent children under nine years old to relatives. With older children the Central Poor Law Authority did not always agree to sending them as at Pershore in 1860<sup>85</sup> where they objected to the Guardians paying 2s. 6d. outdoor relief to allow a ten year old girl to go to her aunt. The girl they suggested was employable and should be found work, but after 8 months the Poor Law Board agreed to her going. The Guardians' level of care in disposing of such children was generally good and only at Kidderminster in 1857<sup>86</sup> was there a peculiar decision. A girl was sent to school in Ireland, where she would certainly never have been inspected by a Returning Officer, but this was at her sister's expense.

Occasionally non-relatives asked for children out of the workhouse and these requests were treated analagously with apprenticeship (after the Parish Apprenticeship Act of 1844).<sup>87</sup> The social status of the applicant was imperative and because most children in the workhouse were at or near the destitution level so too were

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85. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. February 1860. P.R.O. MH12. 14108. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 8.

86. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. January 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 14021. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 11.

87. 7 & 8 Vict. c.101.



acquaintances liable to ask for them from the workhouse. Such applicants were thus inevitably regarded as unsuitable. At Kidderminster in 1865<sup>88</sup> and at Pershore in 1868<sup>89</sup> schoolteachers applied for workhouse children and as by the 1860's teachers were regarded as respectable working-class individuals these children were sent immediately. Even in such cases the child was not allowed to go if the applicant lived a long distance from the home union. Thus Droitwich Guardians in 1871<sup>90</sup> refused to allow a child from the union to be taken to Yorkshire in spite of the respectability of the person applying to take him. Children also legitimately left the workhouse by being adopted and the Guardians responded favourably to the small number of these requests. The master of King's Norton workhouse in 1867<sup>91</sup> asked to adopt a girl when he retired from his post, the arrangement was agreed and the child was supplied with a suit of clothes.

### **iii. Training the Workhouse Child.**

It had been the practice in some Gilbert's Act Workhouses to educate some children<sup>92</sup> and the 1834 Poor

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88. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. September 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14024. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 17.

89. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. April 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14109. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 9.

90. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. March 1871. P.R.O. MH12. 13941. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 13.

91. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. September 1867. P.R.O. MH12. 14044. B.P.L. File F1.

92. Set up under 22 Geo. III c.83.

Law Amendment Act did nothing to prevent this continuing. Academic education was initially used as a means of occupying the childrens' time and this created problems. The children were in the charge of specially appointed school staff. Children over seven years old were also set to work, supervised by the same officers as the adult paupers. Labour was seen as a reforming influence and a deterrent, and the Poor Law Commission enquired in 1835 "are the youths, and the boys and girls, properly set to work; and is care taken to fit them to become useful members of the community?"<sup>93</sup> Kidderminster Guardians in 1837<sup>94</sup> used pauper labour to drive machinery by hand crank and treadmill and the Poor Law Commission made no comment on this. It was suggested that children might be employed in this way, although child labour was never used. At King's Norton a flour mill was installed in 1844.<sup>95</sup> This was worked by boys and 1.5 bushels of flour per period, delimited by meal times, was to be ground by each child. The mill was inefficient and these targets proved impossible to reach. At Droitwich in 1844<sup>96</sup> there were too few paupers to work the mill system and flour was bought from a

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93. P.L.C. Order, 2nd. March 1835. 2nd. ANNUAL REPORT, 1835. H.L.L.

94. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. November 1837. P.R.O. MH12. 14016. W.C.R.O.Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 1.

95. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. June 1844. P.R.O. MH12. 14040. B.P.L. File Fl.

96. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. April 1844. P.R.O. MH12. 14018. W.C.R.O. Acc. 401. Par. 2.

local miller. Eventually these inefficient hand mills were abandoned. The Poor Law Commission required that older boys be employed at some labour within the workhouse and at King's Norton in 1838<sup>97</sup> the Guardians resolved "that boys above 14 years of age are to work with the men", technically an infringement of segregation, but marginal comments on the Commission's copy of the minute make it obvious that this decision had been noted and approved. Work here included stonebreaking and roadbuilding outside the workhouse. Usually workhouse occupations were monotonous. In 1839 half a ton of coconut fibres were bought for mat making at King's Norton<sup>98</sup> and oakum picking in which the fibres of old ropes were teased out was introduced at Kidderminster in the same year.<sup>99</sup> Older children were employed in this labour. Oakum picking was adopted elsewhere and when at its most popular it caused the supply of old ropes to be exhausted. The continuance of this form of workhouse labour was impossible and it was abandoned at Bromsgrove in 1841.<sup>100</sup> Peculiar occupations were sometimes introduced as at Droitwich in

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97. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. June 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14039. B.P.L. File F1.

98. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. May 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14039. B.P.L. File F1.

99. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. June 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

100. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. August 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 13905. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 3.

1845<sup>101</sup> when the price of potatoes was so high that rotten potatoes were procured and grated to obtain "farina".<sup>102</sup> Farina was made into a sort of soup and fed to the inmates and the cost conscious Guardians were initially congratulated for their resource. Five weeks later, however, they were told by the Medical Officer that "grating potatoes was injurious to health."<sup>103</sup> As this was only a short time after the infamous bone grinding scandal at Andover workhouse, and as grating potatoes bore some similarity to bone grinding, the Medical Officer's opinion caused the Poor Law Commission to reply that farina extraction could be abandoned if the Guardians wished. The practice stopped.

Children in county workhouses were sometimes taught a trade and the schoolmaster and schoolmistress were usually responsible for this. Where they were incapable of such instruction instructors were appointed. A tailor or shoemaker who could instruct the children was sometimes employed as porter. This was first done at Bromsgrove in 1839.<sup>104</sup> Older girls were employed in domestic tasks which were considered as vocational

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101. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. November 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 13932. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 3.

102. "Farina" referred to potato starch.

103. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 31st. December 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 13932. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 3.

104. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. March 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 13904. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 400. Par. 1(ii).

training as these individuals were likely to become domestic servants when they left the workhouse. Domestic tasks strictly controlled by the mistress of the house arguably did give relevant training, but so that segregation was ensured no girl was allowed to do domestic tasks in the male wards. This was laid down in 1836.<sup>105</sup> and reaffirmed in 1842.<sup>106</sup> Girls from the workhouse were cheap to employ as servants and were available to working-class individuals who could afford to employ them. They were especially attractive as they were partly trained and subservient. If they were not subservient enough they were returned to the workhouse. At Droitwich in 1840<sup>107</sup> a girl was returned to be punished for her undisclosed misdemeanour and the Poor Law Commission was asked for its opinion on a suitable punishment.<sup>108</sup> It suggested "she should be placed with the adult women, rather than with girls of her own age", although this militated against the Guardians' views of strict classification and therefore they refused to adopt the suggestion.

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105. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Consolidated Order, 7th. March 1836. Op. cit.

106. POOR LAW COMMISSION, General Order, 5th. February 1842. Op. cit.

107. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. April 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 13931. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 2.

108. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. April 1840. Letter from the Poor Law Commission. P.R.O. MH12. 13931. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 2.

Some children in the workhouse were transitory and training them satisfactorily was difficult. There was insufficient time for them to become institutionalised. Typically at Droitwich in 1847 it was stated "an attempt was made some time ago to teach shoemaking, but it had been discontinued in consequence of the smallness of the numbers and the frequent change amongst the boys".<sup>109</sup> Orphans, however, spent up to sixteen years in the workhouse and it should have been possible to provide successful training for them. Such children were less of a problem if institutionalised. In a minority of cases orphans were sent to orphanages and the one most often used by the county unions was Ashy Down at Bristol. The Guardians made an initial per capita payment to the orphanage and then orphans were kept there free of charge. The Central Authority questioned the legality of such initial payments, but at Evesham in 1869<sup>110</sup> the Board was overruled and the practice was continued. When a child was admitted to an orphanage the Guardians signed a declaration that they would readmit the child to the workhouse if they were dismissed from the orphanage, but this never happened. Another approach ridding the unions of unwanted children was used at

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109. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. February 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 13933. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 3.

110. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 17th. August 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 14003. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 402. Par. 20.

Stourbridge in 1870<sup>111</sup> where the Guardians paid £12 per head to send children to Canada with Miss Ryle under the Pauper Emigration Act of 1849.<sup>112</sup> This was the only example within the county of a child emigrating without its parents.

#### **iv. Categories of Child Inmate.**

Deserted children differed little from orphans. They were of two types: the foundlings deserted when a few days old and the older children deserted by parents usually in a situation of distress. King's Norton union had the greatest number of foundlings, probably because the union was contiguous with Birmingham and women with illegitimate children abandoned them just over the town boundary in King's Norton union where the Birmingham Town Police Force would not investigate. The Guardians usually offered a £10 reward to apprehend the deserting mother, but none was ever found. The same approach was used at Droitwich in 1868<sup>113</sup> and at Kidderminster in the same year,<sup>114</sup> both without success. At Droitwich in 1848<sup>115</sup> a young child was found wandering and so

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111. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. November 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 14145.

112. 12 & 13 Vict. c.103.

113. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. August 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 13940. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 12.

114. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. December 1868, P.R.O. MH12. 14024. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 19.

115. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. October 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 13933. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 4.

traumatic had been his experience that he had lost his memory and the Guardians unsuccessfully advertised for information. He remained in the workhouse for the next six years and was then apprenticed.

Children were often in the workhouse with their destitute parents for a single night, or a short period, or sometimes for a more prolonged period. Occasionally one child from a family was taken into the workhouse as a form of relief to the whole family; a system used in the county under the Old Poor Law where parish workhouses existed. At Pershore in 1852<sup>116</sup> several children were taken into the workhouse to enable a woman, whose husband had been transported for a felony, to obtain employment. At Stourbridge in 1855<sup>117</sup> a boy was so badly treated by his parents that he was placed in the workhouse in "a diseased and dangerous state". His parents were successfully prosecuted for their ill-treatment of the boy. At Upton-on-Severn in 1862<sup>118</sup> a mother suddenly became an imbecile and the father was unable to cope. The children were taken into the workhouse until the father was able to care for them.

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116. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. December 1850, 3rd. February 1852, 16th. March 1852 and 30th. March 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 7.

117. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. May 1855. P.R.O. MH12. 14141.

118. UPTON-ON-SEVERN BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. December 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 14187.



Similarly at Shipston-on-Stour in 1856<sup>119</sup> a woman who was confined for the birth of her ninth child brought her eight other children into the workhouse. In this way the working classes utilised the workhouse to cope with otherwise impossible situations. The utility of the workhouse in such cases clearly outweighed its disadvantages.

#### **v. Accommodation for Children.**

Inadequate workhouse accommodation for children proved to be a problem in some unions, but only at Dudley was overcrowding critical. Urban unions clearly had a greater problem in this respect than rural ones, providing a major difference between these types of union. Differential treatment of pauper children between such workhouses appeared always to be a function of overcrowding. Usually, at least in the first decade of operation of the New Poor Law, treatment of children was proscribed by Central Authority Rules and Regulations. It was thus the relative overcrowding of the workhouse and not its nature (rural or urban) that determined the mode of treatment employed. In the most populous union in the county this was probably inevitable. The union had been created under Gilbert's Act in 1782<sup>120</sup> when the accommodation had been suitable for the pauperised poor

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119. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. February 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 14120.

120. 22 Geo. III. c.83. Op. cit.

population of Dudley. By 1849 there was three times that population. The union had been created by the amalgamation of four parishes each urban and highly industrialised and each with its own workhouse. By the 1840's this arrangement was inadequate and the working class demanded a public meeting in 1849<sup>121</sup> to discuss this matter. The Guardians refused this, but by 1853<sup>122</sup> the Poor Law Board Inspector was critical of the workhouse accommodation and a Special Committee of the Guardians was set up<sup>123</sup> to enquire into the need for a new workhouse. It concluded that a new workhouse was necessary, but the Guardians still refused to sanction one. The Poor Law Board then threatened unique action, saying that they would hive off the parish of Sedgley from the union and amalgamate it with Wolverhampton Union if the Guardians refused to co-operate. This would have solved the problem of overcrowding, but it would also have drastically reduced the rate revenue of Dudley Union. This threat was effective and in 1854 the Guardians found it "desirable to agree to the erection of a new workhouse."<sup>124</sup> After considerable discussion and one false start, because of the incompetence of a

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121. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. November 1849, P.R.O. MH12. 13961. D.P.L. A251.

122. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. August 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 13963. D.P.L. A251.

123. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. September, 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 13963. D.P.L. A251.

124. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. May 1854. P.R.O. MH12. 13963. D.P.L. A251.

local builder in wrongly costing the erection of a grandiose "italianate design" from a London architect, a new workhouse was built. It opened in 1858.<sup>125</sup> The method of assessing the adequacy of workhouse accommodation was by the volume of the building. Martley Union in 1859<sup>126</sup> reported the size of bedrooms in the workhouse. Each child was allowed three hundred cubic feet of volume and it was found that the bedrooms would accommodate twenty six boys and eighteen girls, but usually there were more children than this and in 1859<sup>127</sup> the Guardians agreed to alter the workhouse. Three bedrooms were to replace four,<sup>128</sup> The volume allowed under the new scheme was between two hundred and ninety five and three hundred and fifteen cubic feet per child, which satisfied the Board's Regulations, but there was a reduction of accommodation to fourteen children of each sex which reduced rather than increased the accommodation available for children. In spite of this the Poor Law Board appeared satisfied. Similar regulations were used at Upton-on-Severn in 1868<sup>129</sup> where there were sleeping places available for fifteen boys and twelve girls. Again there was overcrowding and it was resolved to increase accommodation to twenty places for boys

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125. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. May 1858. Op. cit.

126. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 30th. July 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14086.

127. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 30th. September 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14086.

128. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. November 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14086.

129. UPTON-ON-SEVERN BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. May 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14189.

and nineteen for girls,<sup>130</sup> Alterations only created ten beds for each sex and bed sharing continued. The Poor Law Board and the Lunacy Commission had opposed such sharing in 1858.<sup>131</sup> King's Norton Guardians planned a new workhouse on a site at Selly Oak in 1868,<sup>132</sup> which was not completed until after the replacement of the Poor Law Board by the Local Government Board in 1871.<sup>133</sup> This workhouse was to accommodate one hundred and fifty men, one hundred and fifty women and one hundred and fifty children, but worryingly it was planned on the same basis used by the Poor Law Commissioners in planning workhouses in the period 1834 to 1840 and seemingly the Poor Law Authorities had learned nothing in the intervening period.

The state of the workhouse was usually the responsibility of the Visiting Committee who dealt with mundane matters of everyday life and with some major matters. They were consulted about the relatively trivial matter of alleviating the offensive state of the children's privies at Bromsgrove in 1855<sup>134</sup> and at

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130. UPTON-ON-SEVERN BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. November 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14189.

131. UPTON-ON-SEVERN BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. January 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14186. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 414. Par. 8.

132. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. August 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14045. B.P.L. File F1.

133. The Poor Law Board was replaced by the Local Government Board in 1871.

134. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. June 1855. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

Pershore in 1856.<sup>135</sup> The solution in both cases was to move the privies a greater distance from the workhouse. It was also their responsibility to ensure continual improvement to the workhouse premises. Gas lighting was fitted at most Worcestershire workhouses at about the time it was fitted at Kidderminster in 1856.<sup>136</sup> More adequate lighting undoubtedly improved living conditions for the inmates including children, but as Kitson-Clark suggested "even a well administered late nineteenth century workhouse could be a very dreary and degraded place".<sup>137</sup> At King's Norton in 1851<sup>138</sup> smoke from a new chimney came into the schoolroom and the builder blamed the architect who in turn blamed the builder. This impasse was resolved by the Visiting Committee who fitted "Dr. Arnott's Patent Ventilating Apparatus". They recommended this to Droitwich Union also in 1851 described it as "an excellent sanitary instrument and very cheap".<sup>139</sup> The Visiting Committee carefully monitored the conditions under which the children lived and ensured that the school staff and mothers kept their

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135. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. September 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 14107. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 7.

136. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. July 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 14021. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 10.

137. KITSON-CLARK, G., The Making of Victorian England, Methuen, 1962. p.140.

138. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. February 1851, P.R.O. MH12. 14042. B.P.L. File Fl.

139. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. April 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14042. B.P.L. File Fl.

children clean. At Pershore in 1853<sup>140</sup> a woman was called before the Visiting Committee and admonished for not keeping her child clean. The Committee also ensured that the children were adequately clothed, but clothes were of the cheapest quality, bought from union wholesale clothiers. At Bromsgrove in 1861 the Committee returned fustian jackets which were "not up to standard"<sup>141</sup> because they could acquire better quality jackets at the same price from another source. No Worcestershire union used pauper labour to make workhouse clothing, as was done at Birmingham workhouse, but repair tailoring was taught in the county's workhouses. The clothing of children under ten years of age was left unmarked. At Bromsgrove in 1863,<sup>142</sup> as elsewhere, clothing for children over ten years of age was "conspicuously marked with the union name" to prevent absconding.

#### vi. "National Uniformity".

Initially children were liable to the rule of "National Uniformity" to provide and maintain the Disciplinary Code of the workhouse. In part this related to the hours of work and it was expected that children over seven

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140. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. February 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 7.

141. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. November 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13911. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

142. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. May 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

years old would work for precisely the same hours as the adults and initially these hours were prescribed by the master of the workhouse. This ran contrary to "National Uniformity" and pressure developed for prescribed hours for all workhouses, thus in 1836<sup>143</sup> the Commission issued an Order setting such times. The paupers were to rise at 5.00 a.m. in Summer and 6.00 a.m. in Winter and they were to work for ten hours per day in Summer and nine hours in Winter. The children were expected to attend school for three hours per day. Meals were consumed simultaneously by all paupers, which created severe catering problems and meals were to be eaten in absolute silence.

This Regulation only existed for two years as it was impossible to enforce. In theory only one hour of the child's day was not allotted to organised activity, enhancing the tendency to institutionalise the children. There were also restrictions on what leisure activities could be pursued. All paupers were to be in bed by 8.00 p.m. but there was some flexibility allowed from the outset, and workhouse masters determined precise details of times for their own workhouse. At Droitwich in 1839 "the hours during which the male children in the house shall daily be engaged in employment....shall be until the end of the quarter; viz, from 8 till half past ten

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143. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Consolidated Order, 7th. March 1836. Op. cit.

O'clock and in school from half past ten till twelve O'clock noon, in work under the instruction of the porter and schoolmaster respectively, and from 2 until five O'clock p.m. - also in work under instruction."<sup>144</sup> In 1840 Worcester Guardians<sup>145</sup> belatedly agreed "Hours of Work" and this was followed in 1842 by a similar arrangement at Bromsgrove<sup>146</sup> where a unified time for rising in both Winter and Summer of 6.00 a.m., with a consequent adjustment of breakfast time was set. In spite of what in modern terms appeared extended workhours for children they compared favourably with the hours worked by children outside the workhouses and Worcester Guardians in 1840 reported; "One evil is

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144. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. May 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 13930. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 1(ii).

145. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. November 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14203.

"Hours of labour were:

25th. March to 29th. September:

Hour of rising.	5.00 a.m.
Work.	6.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.
Breakfast and Prayers.	8.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m.
Work.	9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.
Dinner.	1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.
Work.	2.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.
Supper.	7.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.
Bed.	9.00 p.m.

29th. September to 25th. March:

Hour of Rising.	6.30 a.m.
Work.	7.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.
Breakfast and Prayers.	8.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m.
Work.	9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.
Dinner.	1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.
Work.	2.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.
Supper.	7.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.
Bed.	8.30 p.m.

146. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. August 1842. P.R.O. MH12. 13905. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 400. Par. 2(i).



apparent from the circumstances (these times) that when the Board puts out girls and boys to service, they have invariably to work three hours longer each day than in the workhouse, the consequence is, that the greater part so put out come back to the workhouse because they have more hours work than they have had before."<sup>147</sup> There appeared little evidence of children returned to the workhouse for this reason, however, and it appeared likely that this view was based on little more than prejudice. In 1842<sup>148</sup> the hour of rising was amended nationally to 5.45 a.m. in summer and 6.45 a.m. in winter.

There was usually one exercise yard for each class of pauper where they spent their unallotted time and segregation was easily maintained in these yards. The 1834 Act<sup>149</sup> envisaged that paupers would not be allowed out of the workhouse, but the Poor Law Commission as early as 1837 had discussed the question of inmates leaving the workhouse premises and asked "to what extent, and under what regulations, and subject to what control, may permission be safely and advantageously be given to aged persons and children, occasionally to go beyond the limits of the workhouse, and what are the existing practices in this respect?"<sup>150</sup> In 1842<sup>151</sup> this

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147. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. November 1840. Op. cit.

148. POOR LAW COMMISSION, General Order, 5th. February 1842. Op. cit.

149. 4 & 5 Will. IV. c.76. Op. cit.

150. POOR LAW COMMISSION, General Order, 28th. July 1837. 4th. ANNUAL REPORT, 1838. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1295.

151. POOR LAW COMMISSION, General Order, 5th. February 1842. Op. cit.

Regulation was relaxed. Children under fifteen years old were sometimes allowed out of the workhouse for exercise under the charge of the schoolmistress, schoolmaster or other officer. Kidderminster Guardians agreed and noted; "It is the opinion of this Board that the children of the workhouse should go out in fine weather once or twice a week under the care of the Governess, if the Medical Officer agrees,"<sup>152</sup> in line with the Commission's decision of 1842.<sup>153</sup> In spite of the relaxation of Workhouse Rules a rigid discipline remained, creating and enforcing the tightly ordered and controlled environment of a "total institution".<sup>154</sup> Compliance was ensured in these circumstances.

#### **vii. Punishments and sanctions.**

Before 1841 sanctions imposed in workhouses were supposedly uniform, but there were variations. Diet was sometimes reduced as a punishment for children, but at Fareham Workhouse in Hampshire in 1839 reductions had been so severe that near starvation had resulted. As early as 1837 the Poor Law Commission debated "the expediency of adopting a regulation for preventing

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152. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. April 1843. P.R.O. MH12. 14018. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 4.

153. POOR LAW COMMISSION, General Order, 5th. February 1842. Op. cit.

154. As defined by GOFFMANN, E. in Asylums, Penguin, 1977.

children in the workhouse from being punished by reduction of diet".<sup>155</sup> This matter was not resolved, but was noted in county unions. Thus at King's Norton in 1838 "when the Governor punishes any inmate, such be inflicted by giving him/her food of less palatable or coarser description, not by depriving them of food, in addition to other punishments that are inflicted".<sup>156</sup> Lack of uniformity was partly the result of the idiosyncrasies of individual Workhouse Masters in determining discipline within certain broad guidelines and partly by the freedom of Boards of Guardians in this respect. In 1841 Droitwich Guardians were circularised to give details of "punishments administered to children".<sup>157</sup> This survey led to an order in 1842<sup>158</sup> theoretically making sanctions across the whole Poor Law system uniform. Cases of cruelty and over reaction were inevitable. At Droitwich in 1838<sup>159</sup> the nurse complained about the punishment of a girl by the schoolmistress. The Visiting Committee investigated, the case was proved, and the schoolmistress was told

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155. POOR LAW COMMISSION, General Order, 28th. July 1837. Op. cit.

156. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. April 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14039. B.P.L. File Fl.

157. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 27th. January 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 13931. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 2.

158. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Order, 17th. December 1841. 8th. ANNUAL REPORT, 1842. P.R.O. ZHCl. 1386.

159. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. November 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 13930. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 1(ii).

to cease using corporal punishment on girls, an affirmation of the national rule that whilst boys between seven and fourteen years old could be beaten no girl could be chastised. Occasionally unusual and gross punishments were used. For example at Kidderminster in 1840 "in consequence of the porter John Stokes putting a boy named \_\_\_\_\_ Perks aged 6 years in a sack, tying him up, and hanging him up in one of the rooms of the workhouse for nearly an hour, he (the clerk) had taken out a summons against Stokes, who had been fined by the magistrates for assault".<sup>160</sup> Stokes was immediately dismissed. The Poor Law Authority's attention was drawn to children confined for long periods in darkened rooms in spite of new Regulations in 1841<sup>161</sup> and soiled bedlinen was often the pretext for such treatment. Such iniquitous punishment occurred and cases must often have gone unrecorded. The Commission sought to normalise punishments of child inmates, but in the last analysis they were powerless to prevent unauthorised punishments. The workhouse master although nominally responsible for punishing children delegated his responsibility to the school staff and problems of disciplining pauper children and of over-reaction were recognised. For this reason the Commission tightened the Regulations

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160. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. December 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 3.

161. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Circular, 17th. December 1841. 8th. ANNUAL REPORT, 1842. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1386.

regarding punishment. The Regulation of 1841 stated that no corporal punishment "shall be inflicted on any boy except by the schoolmaster or master of the workhouse", and it was "to be inflicted (with) a rod or other instrument such as shall be approved by the Board of Guardians or Visiting Committee".<sup>162</sup> There was also to be an element of premeditation in inflicting corporal punishment, as it was not to be administered within 6 hours of the offence and the workhouse master was to be present when punishment was inflicted. Punishments were recorded and the Punishment Register was inspected regularly ensuring accountability. The Instructional Letter that accompanied the Regulations in 1841 made revealing statements about the Commission's expectations, that; "The Commissioners are satisfied that good temper joined to firmness and self command will enable the skilful teacher to manage children with little or no corporal punishment. The frequent use of corporal punishment is the common resource of the teacher who from idleness or other defects is incompetent to acquire a command over children by knowledge of their character, and gentle means".<sup>163</sup> Although this was the accepted theory it caused problems as all teachers were not competent. At Kidderminster in 1842 the schoolmistress attended the

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162. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Circular, 1841. *ibid.*

163. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Instructional Letter, 17th. December 1841. 8th. ANNUAL REPORT, 1842. P.R.O. ZHCl. 1386.

Board of Guardians' Meeting at her own request to convey her inability to preserve order and obedience in the school "without resorting to corporal punishment on the girls".<sup>164</sup> The Guardians sympathised with this view and they expressed "their opinion" to the Commissioners that corporal punishment was essential for proper management and discipline and asked "if correcting with a rod on the hand would be deemed corporal punishment". The Commission inevitably replied that it would be an infringement of the rules. At King's Norton in 1850 the Guardians suggested that the Governor "procure one dozen birch rods for the purpose of inflicting chastisement on boys of the workhouse who may deserve chastisement".<sup>165</sup> In spite of Official Regulations against chastising girls it undoubtedly continued to be used illicitly. The Regulations of 1841<sup>166</sup> forbade the Master from laying hands on the paupers, although the porter or another subordinate officer was empowered to apply violent punishment to adults. The the schoolmaster or schoolmistress was responsible for restraining child miscreants. Child paupers who damaged workhouse property, or who were violent towards a fellow inmate, were brought before the magistrates. However, in the

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164. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. August 1842. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 4.

165. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. April 1850, P.R.O. MH12 14041. B.P.L. File Fl.

166. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Instructional Letter, 17th. December 1841. Op. cit.

period from 1834 to 1871 this happened only three times. Sometimes the offender was brought before the Guardians, but again this was rarely done. All punishments were officially sanctioned by the Guardians, often retrospectively, and the relative lack of punishment used in the workhouse bore testimony to the effective social control of the disciplinary system. In spite of being institutionalised workhouse children had the ability to misbehave and to be mischievous, but unlike the children of the "independent poor", punishments in the workhouse were circumscribed by tight regulations and were regulated by the Consolidated Order of 1847.<sup>167</sup> Apart from official punishments there were undoubtedly unofficial unrecorded ones and assessing the amount, type and severity of these was impossible. It was only when the punishments were gross, where injury was inflicted, or where the matter was reported to a senior officer that such punishments were noticed. There were fewer complaints about such treatment between 1847 and 1871 than there had been in the period 1834 and 1847 possibly indicating the increased effectiveness of the Poor Law bureaucracy in controlling individual officers. Removal of privileges was often used as a punishment and some miscreants lost their free time and sometimes "hard labour" was added. The duration of such punishment was seven to fourteen days and this was often associated

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167. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Consolidated Order, 24th. July 1847. Op. cit.

with locking up the offender. Worcester Guardians in 1853 applied to build a "lock up" in the boys' yard with the purpose of "confining such of the boys there as may be liable.....instead of using the lock up in the able bodied men's yard",<sup>168</sup> which infringed segregation. Communication between boys and men had proved possible on these occasions and the Poor Law Board found this situation unsatisfactory. They inevitably agreed to the building of the boys' "lock up", but in a letter in July 1853<sup>169</sup> they announced that the lock up was too small - the structure would have to be at least four feet nine inches square.

The nature of the offence determined the punishment and the age, sex and physical condition of the offender was also important, as was the child's previous discipline record. At Bromsgrove in 1847 two girls were given "fourteen days hard labour"<sup>170</sup> for persistent misbehaviour. At Droitwich in 1856<sup>171</sup> two girls were found to be disobedient, but they were differentially punished. One girl, aged thirteen years, was confined to the refractory ward for twenty four hours with changed diet, with

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168. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. May 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14207.

169. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minute, 8th. July 1853. Letter from the Poor Law Board. P.R.O. MH12. 14207.

170. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. December 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 13908. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 4.

171. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. December 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 7.



permission that she be released after twelve hours if she apologised. The other girl, who was fifteen years old, was sent back to the normal children's ward provided she apologised to the Master for her disobedience. These decisions were clearly tempered with discretion. A refractory ward was only used at Droitwich, where in 1861<sup>172</sup> a boy aged fourteen years used bad language and assaulted his younger brother. His punishment appeared ineffective, however, because within fourteen days the offence was repeated.<sup>173</sup> This time the boy was placed in the able bodied men's ward, but clearly the boy was a recidivist. In 1863 he was again confined in the refractory ward for a similar offence.<sup>174</sup> Beating was reserved for damage to workhouse property, which was considered more grievous than damage to persons, a boy aged thirteen years old at Droitwich in 1849 "burned and otherwise injured the stockings given him to wear" and the Guardians ordered that he "be well flogged". A punishment to "be inflicted with a birch rod".<sup>175</sup> At Bromsgrove in 1864 three boys who assaulted two others

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172. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. November 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 9.

173. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minute, 20th. November 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 9.

174. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. March 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

175. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. December 1849. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 4.

were not chastised, but three boys "who damaged the playroom floor"<sup>176</sup> were beaten. However, where damage was great or there was a threat to life the offender was taken before the magistrates. At Pershore in 1853 three boy were "detected by the Master's son making a fire on the privy seat in the boys yard, that could have set the workhouse on fire".<sup>177</sup> They were found guilty of arson in the magistrates court.

Adults who absconded were always taken before the magistrates, but children were treated with discretion and sometimes the child was returned to the workhouse for punishment. Only a few children, all boys, absconded from five county workhouses (Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Kidderminster, King's Norton and Shipston-on-Stour) in the period 1834 to 1871. The main incidence was at Droitwich Workhouse where twenty of the twenty nine cases took place. This probably related to the design of the workhouse. In 1856<sup>178</sup> it was found necessary to raise the height of the walls to prevent absconding, but this solution was unsuccessful. Without building a replacement workhouse

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176. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. July 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

177. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. December 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 7.

178. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. August 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 7.

the problem proved insoluble. At Bromsgrove in 1853<sup>179</sup> the windows of the boys' bedroom were barred to the outside and latticed to the inside to prevent absconding and these alterations were effective in preventing escapes. The design of most county workhouses satisfactorily prevented the escape of child inmates, but sometimes children escaped whilst out of the workhouse and this increased after 1848 when children were taken out of the workhouse more often. They were encouraged to take walks, to attend lectures and church and they were taken to fairs and art exhibitions, whilst accompanied by an officer. Absconding was clearly more possible from outside the workhouse building.

Of the twenty cases of absconding from Droitwich Workhouse six were second attempts, and a boy called Samual Rogers tried to abscond three times. He was eleven years old at his first attempt in 1861,<sup>180</sup> he attempted again in the same year,<sup>181</sup> and a year later<sup>182</sup> when he got as far as Sculcoates in Leicestershire. On

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179. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. July 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

180. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. August 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 9.

181. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 27th. November 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 9.

182. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. September 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 9.

each occasion the police searched for him, as they did when two boys absconded from King's Norton Workhouse in 1850. These boys were caught very quickly and one of them, Michael Golding, was insistent that he escaped because he had been ill treated in the workhouse. He suggested that he was unnecessarily and severely beaten, but on investigation it was revealed that he had been beaten for scaling the workhouse wall and stealing onions from the gardens. The Guardians believed his chastisement to be "perfectly satisfactory".<sup>183</sup> Golding and his fellow escapee George Benyon were dealt with by the magistrates. The magistrates were also used at Shipston-on-Stour in 1858<sup>184</sup> and expenses were allowed from public funds to prosecute four boys for absconding. In other cases boys who absconded were returned to the workhouse and punished there, as at Droitwich in 1861<sup>185</sup> where three boys absconded. The ringleader, John Smith aged fourteen years, was punished by being "dieted" for forty eight hours. He had been punished previously for swearing and hitting his brother, assaulting a girl inmate, and rudeness to the Master. Another boy aged thirteen years had his diet reduced for twenty four hours, whilst a third, Samuel Rogers<sup>186</sup> was severely reprimanded. At Droitwich in

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183. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 17th. March 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 14041. B.P.L. File F1.

184. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 29th. March 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14121.

185. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. August 1861. Op. cit.

186. Referred to in note 166. The boy attempted to abscond on three occasions.

1868<sup>187</sup> four boys had absconded. They were returned to the workhouse within twenty four hours and the oldest, Frank Newman, was substantially punished by being placed with the able bodied men. The others were merely reprimanded. Perhaps significantly the other two boys, Francis Gore and John Gooding, absconded again in 1870,<sup>188</sup> and Gooding was never caught. Gore was brought back by an uncle and was flogged by the master. Corporal punishment for absconding was also used at Droitwich in 1862 when four boys were caught at Fearnall Heath after four hours of freedom.<sup>189</sup> The leader, the eldest, was flogged and kept in solitary confinement for twelve hours and the remainder reprimanded. At Bromsgrove in 1864<sup>190</sup> three boys who absconded were all flogged. Boys who absconded were usually apprehended and apart from Gooding<sup>191</sup> there were only five others not returned to the workhouse. Three of these were from Droitwich (One in 1856<sup>192</sup> and two in 1863)<sup>193</sup>. Two boys from

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187. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. August 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 13940. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 12.

188. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd, March 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 13941. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 13.

189. Fearnhill Heath was 5 miles from the workhouse.

190. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. July 1864. Op. cit.

191. Referred to in note 180.

192. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. February 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 7.

193. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 17th. August 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

Kidderminster escaped whilst visiting Habberley Valley with the porter; "They were out for recreation, but not having the proper control" and they "rambled about" not under the control of the porter who sent two boys after the two absconders.<sup>194</sup> They returned, saying that they could not find them. The Guardians' Enquiry held because the boys were not found led to the porter's dismissal.

#### **viii. The Diet of the Workhouse Child.**

Manipulation of the pauper's diet was used as punishment for gross infringements of workhouse discipline, but the normal diet of the pauper was inadequate. As Crowther suggests; "The workhouse diet was stripped of everything which made similar food acceptable to the poor; sometimes even salt was not offered at the table",<sup>195</sup> thus reduction of diet from this already minimal standard was an extremely effective sanction, causing even the most intransigent inmates to observe the workhouse rules. This sanction was used against children and thus examination of the workhouse dietary appeared essential. Under the 1834 legislation the nature of the diet was left to the individual Guardians and they relied on experience under the Old Poor Law, but "National Uniformity" demanded more control over diet

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194. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. July 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 14024. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 20.

195. CROWTHER, M.A., The Workhouse System 1834-1929, Methuen, 1981, p.218.

and an attempt was made to do this. Pershore Union received a National Dietary in 1853<sup>196</sup> and the union was asked to choose a diet to be adopted in their workhouse. Eventually all unions were sent six dietaries (see Table 3.1) and they were requested to adopt one of these. All county unions adopted dietary 1, probably because it appeared to be the cheapest. An analysis of the six dietaries was conducted using a computer programme<sup>197</sup> and the energy content of the diet was established. The diet was compared with a modern "normal diet" to demonstrate its deficiencies.<sup>198</sup> Dietary 1 proved deficient in energy content for all classes of pauper and for older boys it was most deficient. There was a 56% shortfall in energy and a 50% deficiency in vitamin C, according to modern dietary theory. It lacked vitamin D totally and there was also a serious deficiency in calcium. Thus pauper children in Worcestershire's workhouses were likely to be suffering from malnutrition and they had reduced resistance to disease. Deficiency diseases were also likely. The dietary chosen was second only to Dietary 2 in its deficiencies. Dietary 3 was nearest to giving a satisfactory diet for child

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196. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. December 1835. P.R.O. MH12. 14103. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc.409. Par. 1.

197. Super Diet was the computer program used. It was written by the University of Surrey Computer Service and adapted by Worcester College of Higher Education Computer Service.

198. The diet used for comparison was what would be regarded as a balanced diet today.

TABLE 3.1.

## THE NATIONAL DIETARY IN 1853.

No. 1.

## DIETARY for Able-bodied Men and Women.

		BREAKFAST		DINNER				SUPPER		
		Bread	Gruel	Cooked Meat	Potatoes	Soup	Suet, or Rice Pudding	Bread	Cheese	Broth
		oz.	Pints	oz.	lb.	Pints	oz.	oz.	oz.	Pints
Sunday .....	Men .....	6	1½	5	½	—	—	6	—	1½
	Women .....	5	1½	5	½	—	—	5	—	1½
Monday .....	Men .....	6	1½	—	—	4½ 1½	—	6	1½	—
	Women .....	5	1½	—	—	4½ 1½	—	5	1½	—
Tuesday .....	Men .....	5	1½	5	½	—	—	6	—	1½
	Women .....	5	1½	5	½	—	—	5	—	1½
Wednesday .....	Men .....	6	1½	—	—	4½ 1½	—	6	1½	—
	Women .....	5	1½	—	—	4½ 1½	—	5	1½	—
Thursday .....	Men .....	6	1½	5	½	—	—	6	—	1½
	Women .....	5	1½	5	½	—	—	5	—	1½
Friday .....	Men .....	6	1½	—	—	—	12	6	1½	—
	Women .....	5	1½	—	—	—	12	5	1½	—
Saturday .....	Men .....	6	1½	—	—	4½ 1½	—	6	1½	—
	Women .....	5	1½	—	—	4½ 1½	—	5	1½	—

*As Part of the regular diet, should be allowed, according to the condition of the patient.*  
 OLD PEOPLE, of 60 Years of Age and upwards, may be allowed, 1 oz. of Tea, 1 oz. of Butter, and 7 oz. of Sugar per Week, in lieu of Gruel for Breakfast, if deemed expedient to make this change.

CHILDREN under 9 Years of Age, to be Dieted at discretion;—above 9 to be allowed the same quantities as Women.

SICK ..... To be Dieted as directed by the Medical Officer.

No. 2.

## GENERAL DIETARY for the Able-bodied.

		BREAKFAST			DINNER				SUPPER		
		Bread	Cheese	Butter	Meat Pudding with Vegetables	Suet Pudding with Vegetables	Bread	Cheese	Bread	Cheese	Butter
		oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.
Sunday .....	Men .....	6	1	—	16	—	—	—	6	1	—
	Women .....	5	—	—	10	—	—	—	5	—	—
Monday .....	Men .....	6	1	—	—	—	7	1	6	1	—
	Women .....	5	—	—	—	—	7	1	5	—	—
Tuesday .....	Men .....	6	1	—	—	16	—	—	6	1	—
	Women .....	5	—	—	—	10	—	—	5	—	—
Wednesday .....	Men .....	6	1	—	—	—	7	1	6	1	—
	Women .....	5	—	—	—	—	7	1	5	—	—
Thursday .....	Men .....	6	1	—	—	—	7	1	6	1	—
	Women .....	5	—	—	—	—	7	1	5	—	—
Friday .....	Men .....	6	1	—	—	16	—	—	6	1	—
	Women .....	5	—	—	—	10	—	—	5	—	—
Saturday .....	Men .....	6	1	—	—	—	7	1	6	1	—
	Women .....	5	—	—	—	—	7	1	5	—	—

OLD PEOPLE, of 60 Years of Age and upwards, may be allowed, 1 oz. of Tea, and Milk or Sugar, also an additional Meat Pudding Dinner on Thursday in each Week, in lieu of Bread and Cheese, to those for whose age and infirmities it may be deemed requisite.  
 CHILDREN under 9 Years of Age, to be Dieted at discretion;—above 9 to be allowed the same quantities as Women.  
 SICK ..... To be Dieted as directed by the Medical Officer.

\* The Vegetables are extra and not included in the Weight specified.



TABLE 3.1. Continued

No. 3.

## DIETARY for Able-bodied Paupers

		BREAKFAST		DINNER					SUPPER	
		Bread	Gruel	Cooked Meat	Potatoes or other Vegetables.	Soup	Bread	Cheese	Bread	Cheese
		oz.	pints	oz.	lb.	pints	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.
Sunday.....	Men.....	8	1½	—	—	—	7	2	6	1½
	Women ..	6	1½	—	—	—	6	1½	5	1½
Monday ....	Men.....	8	1½	—	—	—	7	2	6	1½
	Women ..	6	1½	—	—	—	6	1½	5	1½
Tuesday ....	Men.....	8	1½	8	½	—	—	—	6	1½
	Women ..	6	1½	6	½	—	—	—	5	1½
Wednesday ..	Men.....	8	1½	—	—	—	7	2	6	1½
	Women ..	6	1½	—	—	—	6	1½	5	1½
Thursday ....	Men.....	8	1½	—	—	1½	6	—	6	1½
	Women ..	6	1½	—	—	1½	5	—	5	1½
Friday .....	Men.....	8	1½	—	—	—	7	2	6	1½
	Women ..	6	1½	—	—	—	6	1½	5	1½
Saturday ....	Men.....	8	1½	5	½	—	—	—	6	1½
	Women ..	6	1½	4	½	—	—	—	5	1½

OLD PEOPLE, of 60 Years of Age and upwards, may be allowed 1 oz. of Tea, 5 oz. of Butter, and 7 oz. of Sugar per Week, in lieu of Gruel for Breakfast, if deemed expedient to make this change.

CHILDREN .... under 9 Years of Age to be Dieted at discretion;—above 9 to be allowed the same quantities as Women.

SICK ..... To be Dieted as directed by the Medical Officer.

No. 4.

## DIETARY for Able-bodied Paupers of both Sexes.

		BREAKFAST		DINNER					SUPPER	
		Bread	Gruel	Poached Pork, or Bacon, with Vegetables	Soup	Bread	Meat Boiling with Vegetables	Rice or Meat Boiling with Vegetables	Bread	Cheese
		oz.	pints	oz.	pints	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.
Sunday.....	Men.....	8	1½	—	2	6	—	—	6	2
	Women ..	6	1½	—	1½	5	—	—	6	1½
Monday ....	Men.....	8	1½	—	—	—	—	12	6	2
	Women ..	6	1½	—	—	—	—	10	5	1½
Tuesday ....	Men.....	8	1½	—	2	6	—	—	6	2
	Women ..	6	1½	—	1½	5	—	—	5	1½
Wednesday ..	Men.....	8	1½	8	—	—	—	—	6	2
	Women ..	6	1½	6	—	—	—	—	5	1½
Thursday ....	Men.....	8	1½	—	—	—	—	12	6	2
	Women ..	6	1½	—	—	—	—	10	6	1½
Friday .....	Men.....	8	1½	—	2	6	—	—	6	2
	Women ..	6	1½	—	1½	5	—	—	5	1½
Saturday ....	Men.....	8	1½	—	—	—	12	—	6	2
	Women ..	6	1½	—	—	—	10	—	5	1½

THE VEGETABLES are not included in the weight specified, which is for the Meat when cooked.

If it be thought desirable ½ an oz. of Butter may be given to the Women in lieu of Cheese for Supper.

OLD PEOPLE, of 60 Years of Age and upwards, may be allowed 1 oz. of Tea, 5 oz. of Butter, and 7 oz. of Sugar per Week, in lieu of Gruel for Breakfast if deemed expedient to make this change.

CHILDREN .... under 9 Years of Age to be Dieted at discretion;—above 9 to be allowed the same quantities as Women.

SICK ..... To be Dieted as directed by the Medical Officer.

TABLE 3.1. Continued  
No. 5.  
**DIETARY for Able-bodied Men and Women.**

		BREAKFAST.		DINNER.						SUPPER.		
		Bread	Gruel or Porridge	Cooked Meat	Vegetables	Soup.	Boiled Rice or Sweet Potatoes.	Bread.	Cheese.	Bread.	Potatoes.	Cheese.
		oz.	pints.	oz.	lb.	pints.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	lb.	oz.
Sunday....	Men....	7	1½	5	2	—	—	—	—	7	—	1½
	Women..	6	1½	5	2	—	—	—	—	6	—	1½
Monday..	Men....	7	1½	—	—	—	—	7	—	—	2	—
	Women..	6	1½	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	2	—
Tuesday..	Men....	7	1½	—	—	—	14	—	—	7	—	1½
	Women..	6	1½	—	—	—	12	—	—	6	—	1½
Wednesday.	Men....	7	1½	—	—	—	—	7	2	—	2	—
	Women..	6	1½	—	—	—	—	6	2	—	2	—
Thursday..	Men....	7	1½	5	2	—	—	—	—	7	—	1½
	Women..	6	1½	5	2	—	—	—	—	6	—	1½
Friday....	Men....	7	1½	—	—	1½	—	7	—	—	2	—
	Women..	6	1½	—	—	1½	—	6	—	—	2	—
Saturday..	Men....	7	1½	—	—	—	—	7	2	—	2	—
	Women..	6	1½	—	—	—	—	6	2	—	2	—

OLD PEOPLE, of 60 Years of Age and upwards, may be allowed 1 oz. of Tea, 6 oz. of Butter, and 7 oz. of Sugar per Week, in lieu of Gruel for Breakfast, if deemed expedient to make this change.

CHILDREN.....under 9 Years of Age, to be Dieted at discretion;—above 9 to be allowed the same quantities as Women.

SICK .....To be Dieted as directed by the Medical Officer.

No. 6.  
**DIETARY for Able-bodied Paupers.**

		BREAKFAST.			DINNER.						SUPPER.			
		Bread.	Cheese.	Butter.	Boiled Meat.	Potatoes.	Yeast Dumplings.	Sweet Potatoes.	Bread.	Cheese.	Bread.	Cheese.	Butter.	Broth.
		oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	pints.
Sunday....	Men....	6	1	—	—	—	—	10	—	—	6	1	—	—
	Women..	5	—	½	—	—	—	12	—	—	5	—	½	—
Monday....	Men....	6	1	—	—	—	—	—	6	1	6	1	—	—
	Women..	5	—	½	—	—	—	—	6	1	6	—	½	—
Tuesday..	Men....	6	1	—	6	12	5½	—	—	—	6	—	—	1
	Women..	5	—	½	6	12	5½	—	—	—	5	—	—	1
Wednesday.	Men....	6	1	—	—	—	—	—	6	1	6	1	—	—
	Women..	5	—	½	—	—	—	—	6	1	5	—	½	—
Thursday..	Men....	6	1	—	6	12	5½	—	—	—	6	—	—	1
	Women..	5	—	½	6	12	5½	—	—	—	5	—	—	1
Friday....	Men....	6	1	—	—	—	11	—	—	—	6	1	—	—
	Women..	5	—	½	—	—	11	—	—	—	5	—	½	—
Saturday..	Men....	6	1	—	—	—	—	—	6	1	6	1	—	—
	Women..	5	—	½	—	—	—	—	6	1	5	—	½	—

OLD PEOPLE, being all 60 Years of Age and upwards. { The Weekly addition of 1 oz. of Tea, and Milk or Sugar to those for whose age and infirmities it may be deemed requisite.

CHILDREN under 9 years of age. { Bread and Milk for their Breakfast and Supper, or Gruel when Milk cannot be obtained, also such proportions of the Dinner Diet as may be requisite for their respective ages.

SICK.....Whatever is ordered for them by the Medical Officer.

SOURCE: KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS PAPERS -  
W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 65.

inmates, but even this was 29% deficient in energy for the older boys. By chance and with hindsight the Guardians made a poor choice of diet for their pauper child charges, but how the diet compared with the diet of the children of independent labourers outside the workhouse and whether the inmate child was "less eligible" was thus impossible to assess.

Hodgkinson cites evidence from the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner in 1835 that "the average quantity of food consumed by an agricultural labourer did not exceed 20 oz. per day or 15 oz. of nutritive substance....It was stated that 18 - 24 oz. or 16 oz. of nutritive food per day was requisite to 'support life' in a sound and healthy state, and 24 - 30 oz. for those doing hard labour".<sup>199</sup> This matter was probably uppermost in the Guardians' minds in choosing a dietary, however. The independent labourer was usually in poor physical condition because of an inadequate diet, but at Dudley in 1838 the Guardians stated; "From his very boyhood the labour of the working man from this part of the country (and that holds good for females too) is of a much harder description and his strength cannot be kept without generous diet; this naturally involves the continuance of a similar diet to support him in his

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199. HODGKINSON, Ruth G., The Origins of the National Health Service, Wellcome, 1967, p.48.

declining years. This support is a state of freedom, if not driven by the hand of God from his own purpose within the poor house, he for the main part continues to enjoy, but if his future be to become a parish pauper, the staff of life is taken from under him; he sinks with accelerated paces into the chamber of the grave".<sup>200</sup> The Dudley Guardians demanded a fairer treatment for paupers and a better diet, but this was probably not representative of the county unions as Dudley was in constant dispute with the Central Administration, a matter not resolved before 1871. Whilst not typical these comments do provide an alternative view of the workhouse dietary, perhaps significantly, for the most urban of all Worcestershire Unions.

There was continual tinkering with the diet and details of some changes were conveyed to the Poor Law Central Authority. In all of these changes one matter remained constant, the woman's diet continued to be used for children between seven and sixteen years of age. Below seven years of age the child was dieted "at discretion" and the precise meaning of this phrase must remain a matter for conjecture. Some workhouse masters altered the diet without informing anyone because they regarded such changes as minor culinary adjustments, but on other

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200. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. July 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 13958. D.P.L. A251.

occasions drastic alterations were made. At Bromsgrove in 1840<sup>201</sup> the weight of the supper was reduced from five ounces to four ounces, and in 1843<sup>202</sup> they chose to replace twenty ounces of bacon and potatoes with eight ounces of bread and cheese, and fourteen ounces of boiled rice and treacle was replaced by a similar weight of bread and cheese for the evening meal. This meant that the energy content of the diet which was already inadequate was further reduced.

Sometimes changes were made at medical advice. At Droitwich in 1846 it was "resolved that the children of the workhouse have treacle and dripping cake instead of cheese for supper, as recommended by the Visiting Committee and the Medical Officer",<sup>203</sup> because cheese was regarded as injurious to the young especially if eaten in the evening.

Some changes of diet were forced by external circumstances, as when the failure of the potato crop in the autumn and winter of 1845 and 1846 caused replacement of expensive potatoes with rice, making the diet marginally more satisfactory nutritionally.<sup>204</sup> Only

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201. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. November 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 13905. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 400. Par. 2(i).

202. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. October 1843. P.R.O. MH12. 13906. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 400. Par. 2(ii).

203. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. November 1846. P.R.O. MH12. 13932. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 3.

204. It provided about 100 additional calories per day.

at Droitwich were potatoes kept in the diet, however, when "farina" was extracted from rotten potatoes and fed as soup to the workhouse inmates, as already described.<sup>205</sup> Official comment about diet, at both local and national levels, was reasonably common, but unofficial comments went largely undocumented. Two events at King's Norton gave some slight indication of pauper opinion. In 1839,<sup>206</sup> a complaint about the thinness of the porridge came before the Guardians and was dismissed, but some two years later in 1841<sup>207</sup> the soup served in the same workhouse was the subject of complaint. The inmates refused to eat it and they threw it around the room such was their disgust. The Guardians, present in the workhouse at the time, examined the soup, and determined that it was "of excellent quality", but in spite of what was a serious infraction of the workhouse rules, they did not even admonish the paupers concerned. In spite of Crowther's suggestion that "although the poor were inadequately fed, their preferences differed strongly from the institutional diet, which therefore seemed harsh and punitive"<sup>208</sup> the inmates' reaction to the workhouse diet was that it was preferable to starvation which was the likely plight of those asking for relief. A few

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205. See note 96.

206. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. April 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14039. B.P.L. File Fl.

207. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. January 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 14039. B.P.L. File Fl.

208. CROWTHER, Op cit, p.215.

children, who were infirm in body or mind may have spent their entire childhood of 16 years in the workhouse. Such children had no alternative to the workhouse diet.

One must agree with Chesney that the workhouse regime was "a harsh measure, designed to inspire fear".<sup>209</sup> An adult entered the workhouse voluntarily and was aware that he was liable to the harsh discipline and loss of liberty, but his children had no such choice. They had no say whether they were willing to succumb to workhouse discipline. The adult could also leave the workhouse when he gave three hours notice of his intention. The child left with its parents. Thus adults could not search for work without being encumbered by their dependent children and this system prolonged the period of time the children spent in the workhouse. However, many children were transitory visitors to the workhouse, they returned regularly for short periods.

#### **ix. Religion and the Workhouse Child.**

God-fearing paupers were considered less threatening than Godless ones and the Commission included religious education in their armoury to be used against paupers.

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209. CHESNEY, K., The Victorian Underworld, Penguin, 1972. p.18.

In a predominantly Christian culture this was not surprising and the 1834 Act protected the adult pauper from proselytism, so that no pressure was to be applied to attend church. In 1835 a circular laid down that a Chaplain could be appointed "to examine and catechise the children at least once every month; and after every examination to record the names and general progress, and the state of the children, and the moral and religious state of the inmates."<sup>210</sup> At Pershore in 1837<sup>211</sup> there was dissent about this when the Chaplain resigned. There was a move not to replace him because of the influence of a single Nonconformist Guardian, but this was shortlived and a replacement was soon appointed. For children attendance at church was compulsory, but in 1836<sup>212</sup> attendance was required to be at services of the creed of the parent. This created problems because Anglican Chaplains were appointed to workhouses and pauper parents could demand that their children be taken to services of their own denomination. The impossibility of applying this regulation was recognised, and an order later in 1836<sup>213</sup> allowed Nonconformist ministers to visit the workhouse to

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210. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Circular. 2nd. March 1835. 1st. ANNUAL REPORT, 1835. H.L.L.

211. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. April 1837. P.R.O. MH12. 14104. W,C,R,O, Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 2.

212. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Instructional Letter, 4th. February 1836. 2nd. ANNUAL REPORT, 1836. H.L.L.

213. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Order, 7th. March 1836. Op. cit.



provide religious instruction and spiritual guidance. This principle was reaffirmed in 1838,<sup>214</sup> after which time the aged and the children were allowed to attend church outside the workhouse. In Worcester in 1837<sup>215</sup> paupers including the able-bodied attended Pump Street Chapel, but the Poor Law Commission objected to this. Such attendance ceased within a month probably because able bodied paupers were included. Church attendance outside the workhouse was only to be for aged and child paupers who had to be accompanied by an officer. This caused problems because workhouse officers were invariably Anglican<sup>216</sup> and they could not be compelled to attend Non-conformist churches. It was the aged and not the children who were troublesome as the Commission confided in a letter in March 1838<sup>217</sup> "the children would be more easily conducted to and from church and would be less likely to abuse the privilege than certain aged paupers". As an experiment the minister of the church attended now certified the unsupervised pauper's attendance, but some paupers inevitably absconded and Nonconformist ministers were again invited into the workhouse causing resentment. The pauper on entering the

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214. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Circular Letter, 12th. March 1838. 4th. ANNUAL REPORT, 1838. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1295.

215. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. May 1837. P.R.O. MH12. 14202.

216. Only Anglicans tended to be appointed to officers' posts.

217. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. March 1838. Letter from the Poor Law Commission. P.R.O. MH12. 14016. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

workhouse was asked his creed which was entered into a "Creed Register" and the individual was held to that entry on subsequent entry to the workhouse. The head of the family determined the creed for the whole family and once professed a religious denomination was difficult to change. Church ministers became possessive about their flock and zealously guarded them, so disputes inevitably arose and interdenominational competition developed. Attempts were made to ensure that paupers attended only the services of their professed creed, but in 1842<sup>218</sup> paupers were allowed to contact ministers of other faiths and more proselytism occurred. The implications of all this for orphaned and deserted child inmates was that they invariably attended the Anglican services, whereas children accompanied by adults in the workhouse attended the service of their parents' choice. Parents changing their denomination also changed the religion of their children.

Each union could appoint a Chaplain but there was initially no compulsion to do so. This was made clear under the Consolidated Order of 1836, where it was stated that the Chaplain could be appointed "if the Guardians think fit".<sup>219</sup> This was reaffirmed in 1838<sup>220</sup> when the

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218. POOR LAW COMMISSION, Instructional Letter, 5th. February 1842. 8th. ANNUAL REPORT, 1842. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1386.

219. P.L.C. CONSOLIDATED ORDER, 19th. April 1836, in 3rd. ANNUAL REPORT(1837) PRO ZHC1. 1150.

220. P.L.C. LETTER, 14th, June 1838, in 5th. ANNUAL REPORT, (1839), PRO ZHC1, 1249/1295.

Solicitor General reminded the Poor Law Commission of their responsibility to ensure religious freedom. Initially the Chaplain was made responsible for the religious instruction given by the Schoolmaster and Schoolmistress. Except for the sick and dying the Chaplain was not to administer the Sacrament in the workhouse. The Bishop of the Diocese in which the workhouse stood could give permission for the Sacrament to be administered. A Regulation of 1842<sup>221</sup> allowed this. From the outset it was the intention to create ordered Christian Communities in the workhouses, which were considered most likely to fulfill the expectations of the New Poor Law. Part of the training involved strict observance of Sunday as the Lord's Day. Labour apart from household duties and cooking was not allowed. This religious observance of Sunday had one useful but unintentional effect. It gave hardworking paupers some respite from the monotonous toil of workhouse life.

#### **x. Conclusions.**

During the period from 1834 to 1871 the nature of the treatment of paupers in general, and of pauper children in particular, in the county's workhouses altered and it appeared that in part this was because of a change in the definition of poverty and hence a change in the nature of poverty in line with Himmelfarb's ideas.

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221. P.L.C. REGULATION, 5th. February 1842, in 8th. ANNUAL REPORT (1842) PRO. ZHC1. 1386.

However, the middle and upper classes locally, via their elected representatives the Board of Guardians, still imposed a morality on these poorest members of the working classes. There was also clearly a difference in the treatment of children from union to union, but an urban\rural division in treatment was not easy to discern. More likely differences were due to the relative level of usage of the workhouse. Under stress, particularly that caused by "seasonal destitution", many workhouses were so overcrowded that they could not cope. In this circumstance the Poor Law Central Authority Rules and Regulations proved inflexible and hence unworkable. Differences in treatment inevitably resulted. Unofficial and illegal treatment, sometimes bordering on the criminal, also eroded the Principle of "National Uniformity" in some county workhouses, but inevitably almost all such cases went unrecorded. Children in workhouses were, however, almost uniformly treated where external factors such as over-demand for scarce workhouse places allowed. An institutionalised ill treatment of the children, by feeding them inadequate diet, at the fiat of the Poor Law Authority continued. Children in workhouses were probably treated more fairly and humanely than their contemporaries outside, but they were institutionalised in a total environment designed to make their behaviour acceptable to their social superiors. This utterly confuses any

analysis of relative eligibility. To make meaningful comparison one must determine the value of liberty to an individual and in most cases the freedoms obtained by workhouse children were "negative liberties".<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup>. As discussed by D'ENTREVES, A. "Negative Liberty", in Understanding Society, Open University Press, 1970, pp.30-5.

## **CHAPTER 4.**

### **THE MEDICAL TREATMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE WORKHOUSES OF WORCESTERSHIRE 1834 TO 1871.**

The availability of independent medical treatment for the poor in the nineteenth century was rare unless they accepted Poor Law medicine. To receive such medical charity was, however, a sure sign of a particular level of poverty and was stigmatised. Acceptance of such relief might arguably be used as one facet of a definition of destitution, or even pauperisation. To many, acceptance of medical aid was the first step towards a loss of independence to the Poor Law authority. For this reason acceptance of medical relief was often resisted. Such relief was available both outside and inside the workhouse and this form of aid must be taken into account in any discussion of "Less Eligibility".

#### **i. The Principles of Poor Law medical Treatment.**

Whilst the general treatment of children in workhouses influenced their condition, so, too, did the medical treatment they received. One influence on the middle and upper classes in the nineteenth century regarding disease was that of self-interest. These groups expected public health legislation to be passed to protect them against diseases that attacked the rich as well as the poor. The rising interest in public health from the mid-century onwards was indicative of this concern. The diseases of the poor and malnutrition which were

associated with inadequate diet and poor living conditions were relatively neglected. Medical assistance was unequally available. The upper-class used fashionable doctors, whilst the middle-class were treated by general practitioners, who may also have treated what has been called the "artisan elite".<sup>1</sup> The size of population of the town where the doctor practised determined the social mix of the doctor's patients. In large towns there were sufficient middle-class patients for doctors to treat only the middle-class section of the community, but in the countryside there were too few middle-class individuals to make this possible. Medical aid was available for the working-class who could pay, but the poor were unable to afford it and neither could they afford to belong to sick clubs, or to pay to use dispensaries and infirmaries. They would not accept charity. They had no alternative but to rely on self-medication, quack doctors, and folk remedies. Although the middle and upper classes may have used such remedies they had a choice. Many serious maladies went untreated amongst the working class. Outdoor medical relief was apparently only sought when the patient was beyond treatment and thus most patients treated were seriously ill. It has been suggested that; "The most noxious result of pauperization through medical assistance was that the sick poor, unwilling to

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1. CROSSICK, Geoffrey, An Artisan Elite in Victorian Society, Croom Helm, 1978. Crossick based this on HOBBSAWM, E., "The Labour Aristocracy in the Nineteenth Century", article in Labouring Men, 1964, pp.272-315.

suffer from the stigma, tried to do without adequate attention".<sup>2</sup> Indoor paupers in contrast had their health monitored by the workhouse staff and health dangers to the workhouse community were dealt with promptly. The inmate did not decide when he needed medical help, this was decided for him, indicating his loss of liberty, but he undoubtedly gained in terms of improved health care. The representatives of the ruling elite in positions of political power such as George Cornewall Lewis, a Poor Law Commissioner, expressed the view in 1844 that; "I do not see how it is possible for the State to supply medical relief to the poor of as good a quality and to as great an extent as the richer classes enjoy",<sup>3</sup> but ironically it was those least able to pay who needed the most expert and expensive treatment, although they seldom obtained it.

Medical treatment was a major facet of the treatment of paupers including children. This chapter attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Were pauper children "less eligible" in relation to medical aid and to health in general than the lowest level of independent labourer's children outside the workhouse ?

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2. HODGKINSON, A., The Origin of the National Health Service, Wellcome, 1967. pp.315-6.

3. S.C. ON POOR LAW MEDICAL RELIEF, PP 1844, (312) IX. Question 9832.



2. Did the medical treatment of child paupers comply with expectations that it would be uniform in all unions of the county and at all times in the period 1834 to 1871, and hence was "National Uniformity" maintained with regard to the medical relief of pauper children?

3. What effect did the increasing bureaucracy of the Poor Law have on the medical relief provided to pauper child inmates ?

4. Were the intentions of the Central Poor Law Authority and hence the wishes of many of the middle and upper classes, fulfilled in the context of the Worcestershire Unions ?

It had been Chadwick's intention that medical relief should be available only in the workhouses. Thus to gain medical relief would mean entering the workhouse and becoming a pauper, hence maintaining the "workhouse test". Initially there was to be no proposal for outdoor medical relief in the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834,<sup>4</sup> but the Cabinet of Earl Grey's Government, elected in November 1830, probably saw this as electorally inexpedient. When Grey resigned in July 1834 to be replaced by Viscount Melbourne, who was "contemptuous of Benthamism",<sup>5</sup> and who determined the Cabinet's attitude to the utilitarian Poor Law Policy envisaged by

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4. 4 & 5 Will. IV. c.76.

5. WOODWARD, Sir L., The Age of Reform, O.U.P. 1979. p.99.

Chadwick, there was relaxation of medical relief provisions. Conscious of the cost of Poor Law Administration and the level of the poor-rates necessary, the Cabinet believed the Poor Law would become an issue in the next general election. This was a realistic fear because the anti-poor law movement was becoming vociferous at this time. In these circumstances Chadwick's proposals were not adopted, but medical Relief was still to conform to the major tenets of Poor Law Administration. However, the problems of applying these principles were apparently ignored. None-the-less the poor rates were only used in "relief of absolute destitution."

Medical treatment was costly. It could not be afforded by the poorest members of society who had to become paupers to obtain medical relief and thus they often went untreated until they were critically ill. The Poor Law remained a deterrent, but some people had no choice but to accept medical relief, although to do this meant becoming a pauper. Between 1834 and 1885 this also meant losing one's right to vote - paupers were disenfranchised for life,<sup>6</sup> which whilst it had little impact on the poor individual, because he had no vote anyway, was seen as an important symbol of lost liberty by the middle and upper classes. Orphaned and destitute children were often alone outside the workhouse,

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6. 48 & 49 Vict. c.46.

although they were apprehended and taken to the workhouse or they applied to enter themselves. These children, together with aged persons unfit for work, were to be found in the workhouses in large numbers. These groups also had the greatest propensity for illness, but the Poor Law Amendment Act ignored this consideration. The problem could not be ignored, however, as inmates were taken ill whilst in the workhouse and they had to be treated. This was acceptable, however, as they had succumbed to the "workhouse test" before they became ill. The "test" had not been violated. Refusal of entry to the workhouse by the sick, as initially envisaged in 1834,<sup>7</sup> proved impossible, however, and it became a refuge for the chronically sick poor and a lying in hospital for poor women during their confinements at childbirth. Thus infants were born in the workhouse and some remained there for prolonged periods. A leading article in Lancet in 1842 regarded the medical system created as "a vast machine" which had "no throbbing heart, no voice of tenderness, no human soul"<sup>8</sup> and the medical Relief system was thus regarded as a bureaucracy soon after its inception.

#### **ii. The Development of a Medical Bureaucracy.**

In spite of assertions of the success of the Poor Law

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7. 4 & 5 Will. IV. c.76. Op cit.

8. Lancet, Leading article, 2nd. April 1842. p.16. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

Commission in promoting improvements in medical treatment under the New Poor Law,<sup>9</sup> the Poor Law Commission was replaced by the Poor Law Board in 1847. Replacement was because of the non-accountability to Parliament of the Poor Law Commission, with administrative inefficiency only as a minor consideration. This led to a basic shift in the ideology of the Poor Law and to the demise of Chadwick's utilitarian influence. Locally, a letter from the chairman of Pershore Guardians described "improvements which the new medical system had brought about" in that union.<sup>10</sup> After 1848 increasing bureaucratisation of the Poor Law, indicated by the creation of a stratified administrative structure, led to increased professionalism among the administrators at both national and local levels. Medical regulations were reinterpreted and implemented by a medical profession more aware of its status. This was demonstrated by the creation of the Provincial Medical Association, founded in Worcester in 1832, which became the British Medical Association in 1856. Further improvement was encouraged in 1859 with the founding of the General Medical Council to oversee the maintenance of professional standards amongst doctors. Pragmatic decisions about medical treatment were made, ignoring the original tenets of the

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9. HODGKINSON, *Op cit.* p.10.

10. Letter from Major General M. Marriott, Chairman of Pershore Board of Guardians, 1836. Cited by HODGKINSON, *Op cit.* p.11.

Poor Law, although the local Guardians still controlled the Poor Law locally. Their influence was not constant. It varied from union to union. "National uniformity" was impossible to sustain and Workhouse deterrence to recipients of medical relief undoubtedly varied in its effectiveness. In spite of this Poor Law medical relief still remained a last resort.

There was no mention of medical relief before the Poor Law Commission's Order of 1842<sup>11</sup> laid down practice for the future, but medical aid had been available since 1834. It was regularly referred to in Guardians' Meetings and was provided both inside and outside the workhouse. In larger unions "sick wards" were developed, but there were few of these in Worcestershire. In 1852 Martley workhouse had a sick ward for adults, but the Guardians determined<sup>12</sup> that a separate "sick ward" for children was not necessary. The cost of medical relief rose drastically nationally. It was asserted by the Commissioners in 1840 "that Guardians neglected the qualifications of candidates and appointed incompetent practitioners on the grounds of the lowness of their tender".<sup>13</sup> Costs were scrutinised by Edward Baines, (President of the Poor Law Board) who was more interested in the quality of the treatment provided. He

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11. P.L.C. - General Order, 5th. February 1842. 8th. Annual Report, 1842. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1386.

12. MARTLEY POOR LAW GUARDIANS, Minutes, 31st. August 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14083.

13. HODGKINSON, Op cit. p.77.

insisted that "qualifications of Poor Law Medical Officers ought to be such as to ensure for the poor a degree of skill....equal to that which can be commanded by the more fortunate classes".<sup>14</sup> The Webbs described workhouse infirmaries at this date as "few and far between".<sup>15</sup> An Order of 1865 made "quinine, cod liver oil and other expensive medicines"<sup>16</sup> available to pauper patients replacing cheap and ineffective "union medicines" traditionally supplied by "union druggists" who catered for the "special" needs of Poor Law Unions. These medicines were paid for by the medical officer from his salary, who then charged his patients. In 1867 the Metropolitan Poor Act<sup>17</sup> set up dispensaries in London, and large towns followed suit, but such large towns were unknown in the county - the old inadequate system persisted.

Medical relief was supplied by Medical Officers recruited from amongst the doctors in a district. These posts were advertised for tender and where more than one doctor applied an election was held. If there was no applicant a doctor from an adjacent union was appointed, with the danger that medical relief might be delayed. Once appointed the medical officer held his post "until

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14. BAINES, Edward - Speech to the House of Commons, HANSARD, 12th. July 1853. Vol. 129, c. 138.

15. WEBB, S. and B., English Poor Law History, Part II. Vol. 1., Longman Green, 1929. p. 118.

16. P.L.B. - Circular, 12th. April 1865. In 18th. Annual Report, 1865. P.R.O. ZHC1. 3039.

17. 30 Vict. c.6. Op cit.

he resigned, or died, or became legally disqualified to hold such office, or was removed by the Guardians".<sup>18</sup> Theoretically medical officers thus took care not to displease the Guardians. Some doctors were reluctant to become Poor Law Medical Officers perceiving that "the taint of the poor" and the low salary offered made the posts unattractive. This was continually well illustrated in the correspondence columns of Lancet.<sup>19</sup> In 1834 the salaries of Worcestershire's Medical Officers varied between £30 and £60 per annum, compared with a national average said to be £65 in 1837.<sup>20</sup> However, this figure was inflated by the inclusion of large city and metropolitan salaries. This was contrary to another suggestion,<sup>21</sup> that in the county salaries in most parishes were only £15 to £20. These figures appear to have been computed by dividing the total medical relief by the number of medical officers employed, whereas the figure cited here was computed from the actual salary received. Higher medical fees had been paid by some parish authorities before 1834 and doctors were said to have earned £300 per year before 1834,<sup>22</sup> although apparently not in Worcestershire. It has been

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18. P.L.C. General Consolidated Order 5th. February 1842. Op cit.

19. Lancet, Leading Article, 12th. September 1835. p. 786. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

20. SMITH, F.B., The Peoples' Health 1830-1910, Croom-Helm, 1979. p.360

21. HODGKINSON, Op cit. p.8.

22. Lancet, Leading Article, 3rd. October 1835, p.49. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

suggested<sup>23</sup> that salaries after 1834 had been limited on the direct orders of Edwin Chadwick, who had also insisted that Medical Officers were servants of the Board of Guardians maintaining the correct relationship between officers and Guardians. The Commission were said <sup>24</sup> to have envisaged that the salary paid should not exceed that paid before 1834. Lancet in 1835<sup>25</sup> saw Poor Law doctors bringing relief to the poor and it deplored the decision to save ratepayers' money by cutting expenditure on medical relief at the expense of pauper patients. There continued to be few applicants for union medical posts and only when unqualified assistants were allowed were sufficient applicants forthcoming.

Robert Weale, the local Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, attempted in 1836 to set the salary of medical officers in the county at 3d per patient, with an addition of 10s. for maternity cases.<sup>26</sup> Average salaries were said to be £50 in 1850,<sup>27</sup> a lower figure than previously suggested. Initially unions were divided into as many Medical Districts as the unions saw fit, but differences in density of population, major industry, and size made uniformity of medical districts impossible. The medical

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23. SMITH, Op. cit. p.355.

24. HODGKINSON, Op cit. p.373.

25. Lancet, Leading Article, 26th. December 1835. pp.508-10. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

26. P.L.C., 2nd. Annual Report, 1836. H.L.L.

27. HODGKINSON, Op cit. p. 386.



districts nationally were the subject of investigation in 1847<sup>28</sup> to discover whether they were acceptable and they were theoretically made uniform sometime in the late 1850's. The population density of Dudley, for instance, meant a compact and densely populated medical district was formed, whereas Martley an extremely sparsely populated union had a huge medical district. The Medical Officer of the district in which the workhouse stood was given additional salary for attending the sick of the workhouse. The Workhouse Medical Officers' duties were laid down in 1844<sup>29</sup> and additional duties were laid down later.<sup>30</sup> These required that any child to be apprenticed was to be certified fit by the Medical Officer, a regulation that remained in force until 1871. However, the District Medical Officers' duties were not formally stated until 1849.<sup>31</sup>

### **iii. The Duties of the Workhouse Medical Officer.**

The Workhouse Medical Officer examined paupers entering the workhouse. At Dudley, "Admissions and Discharge Registers" in which the "Condition on Entry" of the paupers was entered by the Master are still extant.<sup>32</sup> Entries were either "dirty" or "very dirty", describing

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28. P.L.C., Consolidated Order, 24th. July 1847, in 13th Annual Report, P.R.O. ZHC1. 1748.

29. P.L.C. - Order, 4th. January 1844. 9th. Annual Report, 1844. P.R.O. ZHC1 1434.

30. 7 & 8 Vict. c.101.

31. P.L.B. - Circular, 16th. November 1849, Art. 138. p.13. 2nd. Annual Report, 1849. P.R.O. ZHC1 1866

32. DUDLEY POOR LAW UNION - Admissions and Discharge Register - 1844 to 1865. D.P.L.

the condition of the pauper's head and body, but Dudley Union which was densely populated was associated with the metal and mining industries and was untypical of the county's unions. The majority of the county was rural, agricultural and sparsely populated. Industry where it existed was usually relatively small scale. Rural areas were contemporaneously regarded as neglected in terms of medical provision. Kidderminster, where the carpet industry thrived, was an exception, but here in the 1830's the industry was cottage based. At Bromyard in Herefordshire, close to the Worcestershire border, there is an extant "Workhouse Admissions and Discharge Register"<sup>33</sup> showing the condition of paupers on entry to that workhouse. In this rural area they differed little from the condition of paupers entering the workhouse in urban Dudley, but infant mortality rates were higher in Dudley as were overall death rates. The incidence of accidents was also much higher. The average age of death in the town in the 1840's was around seventeen years of age. In spite of these differences Dudley applied the same Poor Law Regulations, including Medical Regulations, as the rest of the county, but interpretations of these rules differed.

Supervision of the sick, including sick children, was another facet of the Medical Officer's work. About 30%

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33. BROMYARD POOR LAW UNION (Herefordshire) - Admissions and Discharge Register in Hereford County Record Office. Ref. K42.

of the sick were children kept in the children's wards. At Dudley and Kidderminster separate sick wards for children were provided, but occasionally even here sick children were found in the same wards as sick adults. Elsewhere girls were occasionally in the same wards as unchaste women. These wards did not contain diagnosed venereal disease sufferers, who were always carefully segregated, because these were regarded as most dangerous to young girl inmates. Obviously some women afflicted with these disease were undiagnosed, indeed these women probably did their best to hide their symptoms, and they were thus placed in the able-bodied women's ward of the workhouse. It was probably fear of moral infection rather than of spreading the disease that explained the reluctance to mix these classes of pauper. Sometimes epidemic diseases caused vagrant wards to be emptied for use as isolation wards, so sick children were removed to them together with adult paupers. Eventually unions established special isolation hospitals, some built in the grounds of the workhouses, but often at a distance from the workhouse. In times of epidemic these hospitals came to be used for non-pauper patients as well, indicating the seriousness with which such diseases were regarded. The threat of the diseases was greater than the threat of pauperism; social pressures forcing sufferers to enter these Poor Law hospitals.

#### iv. Insane, Imbecile and Idiot Pauper Children.

Insane adult paupers were sometimes kept in the general wards of workhouses, but pauper children did not come into contact with these individuals, as segregation ensured that there was no contact. Insane, idiot and imbecile children were, however, kept in the normal childrens' wards, being tolerated if they were not dangerous or disruptive. Insanity was defined in the nineteenth century as a disordered functioning of the mind which could happen at any stage in life. The other two afflictions were from birth. Idiocy implied a failure to develop intelligence, whilst imbecility was a weakness of mind, where intelligence was displayed in some aspects of behaviour but not in others. Imbeciles in particular were apparently regarded as very cunning. The Medical Officer sometimes attempted to treat them, and at Kidderminster in 1840 a boy called Henry Webb, an "idiot....from birth" who was not disruptive was treated.<sup>34</sup> The Guardians had considered sending him to the lunatic asylum, but when he was successfully treated for inflammation of the brain (the diagnosed cause of his idiocy) by "bleeding", by placing him on a "low diet" and by keeping him quiet by undisclosed means, he improved and remained in the workhouse.<sup>35</sup>

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34. KIDDERMINSTER POOR LAW GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. February 1840. P.R.O. MH12 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 3.

35. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. March 1840. P.R.O. MH12 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 3.

Paupers in Webb's position were not specially inspected before 1845 and the treatment they were given may sometimes have been inappropriate. In 1844 the Poor Law Commission's Annual Report stated "Paupers of unsound mind should, where there is a chance of cure, be sent to an asylum as soon as possible after the commencement of the malady."<sup>36</sup> The Lunacy Commission created in 1845 under the Lunatic Asylums and Lunatics' Act<sup>37</sup> and the Lunatics' Act was to ensure this.<sup>38</sup> These were intended to alter the way in which lunatics were treated. Six Lunacy Commissioners were appointed, each with experience of treating the mentally ill, to inspect asylums. Each was given a salary of £1,500 plus travelling expenses to attract well qualified applicants.<sup>39</sup> This was in stark contrast to the appointment of Assistant Poor Law Commissioners who had little experience of the poor and who were like most civil servants appointed by patronage. The Lunatics' Act<sup>40</sup> stated that only two lunatics were to be kept in a house which was not an asylum, but the Guardians often ignored this regulation regarding workhouses because of the cost of implementing it. It has been suggested that to the Poor Law Commissioners "pauper lunatics were

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36. P.L.C., 10th. Annual Report 1844, ZHC1. 1493.

37. 8 & 9 Vict. c.101.

38. 8 & 9 Vict. c.83.

39. 8 & 9 Vict. c.101., sections 3 to 5. Op. cit.

40. 8 & 9 Vict. c.83. Op. cit.

first and foremost paupers",<sup>41</sup> thus pauper child lunatics were kept in workhouses. Before 1857 only workhouses close to asylums were inspected by the Lunacy Commissioners. Thus only Worcester and Martley of the county workhouses, which were close to the County Asylum at Powick, were inspected before 1857, after which regulations ensured that all workhouses were scrutinised. After this, theoretically, all lunatics in workhouses were to be removed to an asylum, but in spite of this not all child lunatics were sent to the asylum. After 1860 it was estimated <sup>42</sup> that 4% of paupers were lunatics. The Lunatic Amendment Act of 1862<sup>43</sup> again attempted reform, this time making the Relieving Officer responsible for bringing cases of pauper lunacy before the magistrates, who were expected to commit the lunatics to an asylum. Few were committed, however, and it has been suggested that "the vast proportion of lunatic paupers were detained in workhouses".<sup>44</sup> There were probably child pauper lunatics in all county unions, but there were few children in the county lunatic asylum.

Responsibility for Lunatic Returns made to the Poor Law Commission was transferred in 1847 to the Lunacy Commission, but there was no increase in the numbers of

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41. MELLETT, D.J., "Bureaucracy and Mental Illness: The Commissioners on Lunacy 1845 - 90", Journal of Medical History, 1981, Vol. 25, p.236.

42. HODGKINSON, Op cit. p.575.

43. 25 & 26 Vict. c.111.

44. MELLETT, Op. cit. p.243.

lunatics reported. It appeared likely that the only accurate returns made to the Lunacy Commission continued to be from inspected workhouses. The first returns for Worcester Workhouse were made in 1847 when a boy, William Noinent aged thirteen years,<sup>45</sup> was the only child reported to the Lunacy Commissioners. He was "not dangerous" and "not dirty", but he was described as "an idiot", but the fact that he posed no threat meant that the Guardians were willing to maintain him in the workhouse. Guardians were therefore tempted to record lunatics as "not dangerous", avoiding the cost of commitment to a lunatic asylum. When the Lunacy Commissioners visited Worcester Workhouse they were aware of Noinent, but he was not removed to an asylum. Many unions made no returns on children of this type, but such children must have existed and there must be some question about the accuracy of lunacy statistics. One study<sup>46</sup> cited statistics that the author believed to be underestimates because of this tendency. When lunatic children were recorded they were regarded as containable within the workhouse, avoiding pressure to remove them to an asylum, in spite of legislation suggesting that this was desirable and possible. The poor-rate payers thus incurred no additional expense. Saving money to protect the interests of local

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45. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. January 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14205.

46. MELLETT, Op. cit. p. 236.

ratepayers was seen as a basic function of the local Board of Guardians, who were elected by the poor-rate payers to be conscious of such costs. Most children recorded on the Lunatic Returns were described as "idiot from birth" and were thus incurable. At Martley in 1851<sup>47</sup> a boy was committed to the asylum at Fairford in Gloucestershire<sup>48</sup> at a cost of 2s.2d. per week, whereas the cost at Worcestershire Asylum at Powick was 12s. per week. Thus the Guardians wishing to save money used Fairford Asylum. Interestingly, at about this time, Leah Timms, a thirteen year old girl from Shipston-on-Stour Union<sup>49</sup> was sent to Fairford asylum, but the charge for her was 8s.6d. per week. This discrepancy in cost was difficult to explain. More usually child lunatics were kept by parents or relatives, who were paid outdoor relief to maintain them, and they were thus hidden from the Lunacy Commissioners. The Guardians thus evaded the expense of maintaining such children in asylums. When children were in the workhouse the Lunacy Commissions inspected them and sometimes improved the conditions under which they were kept. For instance the Lunacy Commissioner objected to the way in which two idiot boys shared a bed at Upton-on-Severn Workhouse in 1858.<sup>50</sup> It

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47. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. January 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14083.

48. Gloucestershire County Lunatic Asylum was at Fairford.

49. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. January 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14119.

50. UPTON-ON-SEVERN BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. January 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14186. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 6.



was eventually recommended that bed sharing be banned. The Guardians acted swiftly to ban the practice and to improve other aspects of the treatment of these boys. The Webbs suggested that the Lunacy Commission was not as conscious of "Less Eligibility" as was the Poor Law Board, who regarded any suggestion made by the Lunacy Commission as "preposterously extravagant".<sup>51</sup> Bed sharing by idiot boys was, however, considered normal by the Poor Law Board and the Guardians, but both eventually agreed to its abandonment.<sup>52</sup> The boys at Upton-on-Severn were cared for by an aged pauper when next visited by the Lunacy Commissioner, who complimented the Guardians on the level of care provided.<sup>53</sup> Comparison with idiot boys outside the workhouse was impossible, but it was unlikely that the lowest level of independent labourer found it possible to provide an individual bed, permanent attendance and additional food for idiot children. These boys thus appeared "more eligible" than their non-pauper contemporaries. Lunatic asylums described in various studies<sup>54</sup> did not differentiate between the lunatics of various social

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51. WEBB, S. and B., English Poor Law History Part II. Vol. 1., Op. cit., p. 341.

52. UPTON-ON-SEVERN BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. January 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14119. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 6.

53. UPTON-ON-SEVERN BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. July 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14186. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 6.

54. MASTERS, A. Bedlam, R.K.P., 1977. and MELLETT, Op. cit.

classes. The lower middle class and the working classes were often committed to the same licensed asylums. Thus, when the Medical Officer of Shipston-on-Stour Union was diagnosed insane in 1863<sup>55</sup> he was ironically committed to Powick Asylum along with his own pauper patients. Non-pauper poor families kept insane relatives at home, unless they were troublesome, in a similar way to the pauperised poor, but some individuals became paupers wholly because they received outdoor relief to support their insane relatives. "National Uniformity" for the mentally ill was ignored and the implementation of rules varied. The utilitarian principles on which the Poor Law was based were impractical when applied to "lunatics, idiots and imbeciles". By a sort of administrative sleight of hand the mentally ill and defective children virtually disappeared from the county's workhouses by 1860, because they were apparently now at home with their parents or relatives and out of sight of the Lunacy Commissioners.

#### **v. The Diet of the Sick Inmate child.**

The workhouse Medical Officer was responsible for "diet, classification and treatment". The ill child's diet was supplemented<sup>56</sup> to treat a range of medical conditions. At King's Norton in 1853<sup>57</sup> alteration of diet was

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55 SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. October 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14122.

56. P.L.C., Circular, January 1844. In the 9th. Annual Report, 1844. ZHC1. 1493.

57. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. December 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14042. B.P.L. File Fl.

thought preventive of illness when cheese was removed from the children's diet because it was thought to be injurious to their health. The medical officer was apparently made solely responsible for the diet of the sick in 1860.<sup>58</sup> Sometimes, however, there were disputes about such dietary changes. When Dr. E. Smith, who conducted a national survey of workhouse diets, said that bacon should be removed from the workhouse child's diet at Leicester in 1871 a correspondent to Lancet disagreed stating, "when there are so many evils to redress in the workhouse it seems perfectly monstrous that inspectors should be employed at large salaries to cut down the meat supply to growing children".<sup>59</sup> Usually diet was only altered for a specific purpose. Thus measles was treated by a general addition to the diet, which, whilst it might not have aided the cure of the disease in specific terms, hardly hindered recovery. Even the sick child's diet was still inadequate, however. Thus at Bromsgrove in 1859 a sick boy named James Clarke had "eaten some flesh and marrow of the leg of a horse".<sup>60</sup> Although it was apparently not normal to eat horsemeat the major cause of anguish was that the horsemeat was raw. The medical officer ascribed this action to hunger, but the Guardians ignored the incident, as did the Poor

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58. POOR LAW ACT 1860 Ref. HODGKINSON, Op cit. 362.

59. Lancet, Anonymous letter, 4th. February 1871. p.181. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

60. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. January 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 13911. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

Law Board. Whilst the ill pauper child's diet was inadequate it was probably better than the diet of the independent labourer's sick child. Some Guardians, however, such as those at Martley, were assiduous in maintaining "Less Eligibility", but medical decisions about alterations to ill children's diets in Martley went unchallenged. The medical profession developed competence between 1834 and 1871, gaining credibility and acceptance, but methods used by some doctors remained idiosyncratic and thus notions of uniformity of treatment were impossible.

#### **vi. Epidemics, Public Health and the Workhouses.**

The Medical Officer presented a written Annual Report, which in populous towns became lengthy, particularly after the Commission on the Health of Towns in 1842.<sup>61</sup> Not all towns were reported on because some towns were not considered populous enough. Dudley, Kidderminster, Stourbridge and Worcester produced reports, other county towns did not do so. There was no requirement for rural unions to produce such reports, where these were written. The health of workhouse inmates was included in reports, as were health factors such as the purity of the water in the workhouse. Drinking water for workhouses was usually obtained from a well, but where the well failed, surface water which invariably was

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61. REPORT ON THE SANITARY CONDITION OF THE LABOURING POPULATION OF GREAT BRITAIN, July 1842. P.P. 1842 (HL-) XXVI.

contaminated with sewage was used. Such contamination was inevitable, but it was only at Bromsgrove in 1861<sup>62</sup> that this caused a serious health threat. It was possible to argue that there was probably a background level of sewage contamination in all drinking water in workhouses and towns alike, but in lower working-class areas of towns, where there was overcrowded conditions, inhabitants probably developed a resistance to such bacteria. It was these people who were likely to become inmates of the workhouses and they were unaffected by the slight contamination of the drinking water. Public health aspects of the Medical Officer's duties increased in importance. He was sometimes initially ill-equipped to fulfil them, although with experience his expertise developed. Visiting Committees accepted the efficacy of his solutions to health problems and workhouse drains were relaid, fever wards constructed and sanitary conditions in the workhouses improved at considerable cost to the Poor Rate-payer.

Epidemic disease was most severe in the poorest areas of densely populated towns and cities. Worcestershire had few of these because most of its population lived in the countryside or in small towns and villages. Only the Black Country fringe of the county was densely populated. Dudley, Kidderminster and Stourbridge were

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62. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. March 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13911. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

thus most susceptible to epidemic diseases. Cholera and typhoid fever caused panic amongst all sections of the community, but whilst the working classes were probably fatalistic about them the middle and upper classes were frightened of them and wanted the threat combatted. It was thus partly self-interest rather than altruism that led to various Public Health measures. It was the working classes who were most vulnerable to these diseases, however, and it was the young who were most vulnerable of all. It has been stated that, From the 1840's onwards....about one quarter of all deaths recorded in England and Wales were of infants under one year".<sup>63</sup> It was considered contemporaneously that the illegitimate child, the "offspring of degraded parents" was most exposed to "constitutional weakness,.....violence, and the diseases that ensued from neglect".<sup>64</sup> The workhouses contained many such children who were considered most in danger.

Epidemic diseases in the county were invariably blamed on vagrants, who were said to bring diseases to the area in the summer months when casual agricultural work was available, as at Kidderminster in 1848.<sup>65</sup> Vagrants applied for casual indoor relief and were placed in

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63. SMITH, Op. cit. p.65.

64. BUTLER, Henry, What is the Harm, 1864. Quoted by SMITH, Op. cit. p.70.

65. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. October 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 7.

special wards where separation was vigorously applied. Child inmates were thus protected even from the sight of them. Cholera was the most feared of all the epidemic diseases, but there were relatively few cases of the disease in the county between 1834 and 1871 and fewer still in the workhouses. There was a case of cholera at Kidderminster in 1848.<sup>66</sup> Medical Officers gave brandy as the only medication for cholera and advised that sanitary precautions be taken. Thus bedpans were introduced to prevent the soiling of bedclothes. The suggestion that an outbreak of cholera was possible produced action, as at Pershore in 1854<sup>67</sup> when the Guardians had the workhouse water supply analysed, but no pathogenic organism was found. These measures were taken at the time of "the last outbreak of cholera in Britain when the disease was still feared".<sup>68</sup> Other Poor Law unions demanded vigilance<sup>69</sup> and Special Committees of Guardians were set up to monitor the progress of the disease.<sup>70</sup>

Victims of epidemic disease were given an improved diet

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66. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. November 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 7.

67. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. November 1854. P.R.O. MH12. 14107. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. No. 409. Par. 7.

68. WEBB. English Poor Law Policy, Cass, 1910, p.116.

69. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. August 1866. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

70. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 30th. July 1866. P.R.O. MH12. 13939. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par.11.

and were isolated in special wards kept fumigated, ventilated, and whitewashed.<sup>71</sup> Typhus, which was initially indistinguishable from the far more serious typhoid fever, both causing diarrhoea and vomiting, was the most common epidemic disease. The Poor Law Board suggested in 1848,<sup>72</sup> that the victims of these diseases be lodged away from the workhouse. Outdoor relief was paid to relatives to look after them in their homes. This was not done in the county, however, and sufferers were still admitted to the workhouses. Vagrants were blamed for introducing the disease to the area at Worcester in 1847.<sup>73</sup> Children contracted it in Bromsgrove in 1862,<sup>74</sup> a boy died of it<sup>75</sup> and several other children were ill with the disease. The Medical Officer prescribed milk pudding instead of cheese in the children's supper diet to combat the disease, a preventive measure as well as a treatment because non-sufferers were also given this diet. The wards, where the children suffering from the disease were kept, were later fumigated with chloride of lime.

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71. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 29th. January 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 13931. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 2.

72. P.L.B., Official Circular 14th. & 15th., April and May 1848. 1st. Annual Report, 1848. P.R.O. ZHCl. 1748.

73. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. June, 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14205.

74. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 27th. May 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

75. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st April 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.



Measles was regarded as a disease of the poor<sup>76</sup> although it was recorded only twice in Droitwich workhouse.<sup>77</sup> It was the childhood disease that killed more children than any other. Diphtheria was regarded most seriously. The indications were that it was brought to England from Europe in 1855. In 1859 Stourbridge Guardians recorded the disease as "common in the union",<sup>78</sup> two weeks after the response to a Poor Law Board circular asking about cases was that there were none.<sup>79</sup> There were no cases at that stage. Children were the main victims of the disease in the county's most serious outbreak of epidemic disease, at Bromsgrove in 1866.<sup>80</sup> Outside the workhouse, croup and whooping cough were common childhood ailments afflicting those under two years old. Croup was debilitating and was treated by inhalation of steam,<sup>81</sup> although some doctors recommended using opium.<sup>82</sup> Whooping cough was also serious, killing between 8,099 and 13,612 children

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76. SMITH, Op. cit. p.143.

77. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. June 1859, P.R.O. MH12. 13937. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par.8. and 6th. January 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 13941. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 12.

78. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. June 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14137.

79. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. May 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14137.

80. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. May 1866. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

81. KIRBY, Letter, Lancet, 31st. October 1835. p. 178. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

82. Lancet, 18th. March 1837. p. 896. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

annually between 1841 and 1910.<sup>83</sup> This disease was a problem only at Droitwich Workhouse in 1868<sup>84</sup> where there were twelve cases, none fatal. Scarlet fever was rare in county workhouses. There was an outbreak of the disease at Kidderminster Workhouse in 1865,<sup>85</sup> although no-one died. At Bromsgrove in 1870<sup>86</sup> a fever ward was opened to victims of the disease from outside the workhouse. Children permanently in the workhouse such as orphans, deserted children and long-term child inmates were thus "more eligible" with regard to the treatment of epidemic disease than their non-pauper contemporaries. They were constantly scrutinised for signs of diseases and immediately treated if any were found. As they lived in complete isolation this conferred advantages of isolation from infection. This was further ensured by suspending visits from non-inmates at times of epidemic. Workhouse children were thus kept in isolated, relatively hygienic conditions, which reduced liability of others to catching diseases. Children in the county's workhouses arguably caught diseases less often than did their contemporaries outside the workhouse, but inmate children were weak and

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83. SMITH, Op. cit. p.105.

84. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. July 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 13940. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 12.

85. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. April 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 17.

86. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. June 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 13913. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

suffering from "dibility",<sup>87</sup> probably because of undiagnosed tuberculosis which was ever present amongst the poor. Two types of tuberculosis were recognised; phthisis (or consumption), which affected the lungs, and scrofula which affected the bones, muscle and skin. Tubercles caused swelling of the tissues causing irritation in the lungs, coughing and irreparable damage to lung tissue. In the skin and muscles it caused swellings sometimes requiring amputation.<sup>88</sup> Usually the only treatment given was an improved diet, as cure was seldom possible. The pauper child with tuberculosis was at least given an improved diet. The child of an independent labourer on the margins of destitution logically did not obtain such treatment and the principle of "Less Eligibility" was again violated in this context.

#### **vii. Institutional Diseases.**

The skin disease known as "itch" was most difficult to cure, a situation worsened by the ambivalence of medical men about the cause of the complaint. Thus an article in Lancet in 1834 asserted "The manner of contagion....is not well known, and physiologists have not yet decided whether a peculiar animal exists in the morbid secretions and reproduces the disease".<sup>89</sup> A year later

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87. Nineteenth-Century spelling of debility.

88. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 21st. October 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 14211.

89. MAGENDIE, F. "Physical Conditions of the Tissues of the Human Body", Lancet, November 8th. 1834. p. 229. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

another doctor was certain that the scabies mite was the cause of the disease and he recommended sulphuretted hydrogen as a treatment,<sup>90</sup> but there was no consensus about treatment. By 1871<sup>91</sup> medical opinion suggested itch was scabies and sometimes children's diets were altered to treat the complaint.<sup>92</sup> For instance tea, sugar and butter were added to their diet, but at other times one food was substituted for another<sup>93</sup> and cheese was often seen as responsible for the continuance of the disease. An outside expert<sup>94</sup> agreed that diet was important, suggesting that children became susceptible to itch when enfeebled by lack of nourishment. Improved diet was thus the key to treatment. Descriptions of itch appear to suggest that it was several different skin infections. It was described as "a lichenous rash, which created ulcers and scabs on the limbs, between the fingers, on the buttocks, and sometimes the face".<sup>95</sup> Papules full of pus formed which infected and reinfected the children.

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90. CRISP, R.H., Letter, Lancet, 7th. March 1835. p. 810. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

91. Lancet, 11th. November 1871. p.675. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

92. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 17th. April 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par 9.

93. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 21st. April 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 13913. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

94. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 27th. October 1868. The expert was George E. Hyde the Medical Officer of Worcester Gaol. P.R.O. MH12. 13913. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

95. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. March 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 13940. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 12.

Vitamin deficiency probably aided infection by itch, but a lack of cleanliness appeared to aid continuance of the complaint. The disease was so contagious that the Medical Officer at Kidderminster in 1856<sup>96</sup> believed that mere physical contact with visitors to the workhouse was sufficient to spread the disease. Bed sharing was also considered a cause of the spread of the disease, which it almost certainly was. Children with the disease were normally isolated and only allowed back into the children's ward when completely recovered. Itch must have been a constant infection amongst the poor outside the workhouse, being regarded as inevitable and no attempt was made to alleviate it. Transient child inmates were liable to introduce the disease to the workhouse, thus these new entrants needed the closest scrutiny. Hygiene was improved to eradicate itch - a remedy recommended by the Poor Law Commission in 1847.<sup>97</sup> Clean bedding was usually given regularly, but because bedsharing continued there must have been cross infection. At Martley in 1858<sup>98</sup> three children shared beds in the children's ward a situation regarded as "inevitable".<sup>99</sup> Lice were also considered inevitable.<sup>100</sup>

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96. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. July 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 14021. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 11.

97. P.L.C., 13th. Annual Report, 1847. Op cit.

98. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. December 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 14085.

99. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. February 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14086.

100. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. April 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

As typhus and typhoid fevers were suspected to be spread by bacteria in the lice faeces these parasites were thus considered particularly dangerous. Bedlinen was washed weekly at Droitwich in 1839,<sup>101</sup> but at Bromsgrove the bed linen was dipped in chloride of lime and then mercuric chloride to kill lice.<sup>102</sup> This undoubtedly worked, but it also ruined the sheets and made them uncomfortable to use and poisonous. Lice and vermin in bedclothes were considered "an abominable nuisance" as late as 1862 in Kidderminster,<sup>103</sup> where the bedlinen was treated with mercuric chloride. This chemical was also applied to the skin as a treatment for itch, as recommended in Lancet in 1836,<sup>104</sup> but more usually isolation was used in an attempted treatment. Fever hospital was opened to receive sufferers at Droitwich in 1857.<sup>105</sup> Only children were treated for itch, adults apparently being left untreated, possibly because the disease required long term treatment. It was only children permanently in the workhouse who remained in the workhouse long enough to be cured, but children who were transitory visitors there undoubtedly were a source

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101. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 16th. January 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 13930. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 1(ii).

102. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. January 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 13904. W.C.R.O. Loc 251. Acc. 400. Par. 1(ii).

103. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. February 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 15.

104. Lancet, 31st. December 1836. p. 507. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

105. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. April 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 8.

of reinfection by the disease. The most serious outbreak of itch was at Kidderminster in 1861, when the disease was described as "obstinate and taking time",<sup>106</sup> sixty five children were afflicted with the complaint on this occasion. Some unions treated itch by taking the children to rented accommodation at "a healthy spot". King's Norton used a house on the Lickey Hills for such convalescence in 1862.<sup>107</sup> They employed a nurse to care for the children, with the schoolmaster or schoolmistress continuing to be responsible for educating the children.

The Medical Officer at Droitwich in 1868<sup>108</sup> provided old clothes at the old barn where children suffering from itch were accommodated. These were worn and then burned to prevent cross infection. The disease slowly succumbed to this treatment. An expert asked his opinion of this treatment<sup>109</sup> found the Medical Officer's treatment satisfactory, but the Guardians proceeded with a case of negligence against the Medical Officer anyway.<sup>110</sup> He was found guilty, but he refused to resign.

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106. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minute, 26th. November 1861 to 4th. March 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 14.

107. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. May 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 14044. B.P.L. File F1.

108. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIAN, Minutes, 16th. September 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 13940. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 12.

109. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. and 27th. October 1868. P.R.O. MH12 13940. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc 401. Par. 12.

110. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 27th. October 1868. P.R.O. MH12 13940. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 12.

However, when in 1871 a similar charge was brought against him<sup>111</sup> he did resign. The most drastic treatment of itch was at Bromsgrove in 1842.<sup>112</sup> A boy, named Henry Cartwright, was "immersed in a solution of sulphuret of potash," a treatment often used to kill the smell of paupers, but the child died. The Medical Officer who ordered the treatment and who was not present when the matron administered it was found guilty of neglect. However, at a subsequent enquiry conducted by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, the Guardians did not call for the doctor's resignation, because of "his previous zeal in performing his duties". The matron was found not guilty. A similar treatment of itch was used at Kidderminster in 1863<sup>113</sup> and at Droitwich in 1868.<sup>114</sup> Cures for itch were generally unsuccessful with the disease persisting in most unions, but its virulence fluctuated, probably due to changing climatic conditions. The disease was common in the summer months, but almost absent in the winter. The treatments attempted, including outdoor exercise and preventing sunlight in children's rooms, were unsuccessful.

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111. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. January 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 13941. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 13.

112. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 31st. January 1842. P.R.O. MH12. 13905. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 400. Par. 2(i)

113. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. March 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 15.

114. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. March 1868. Op. cit.



Improved diet and hygiene appeared most successful in treating the disease.

Ringworm or "scaldhead" was similar to itch, the two complaints possibly being confused. Kidderminster had the highest incidence of both diseases, (as indicated by extant medical records) but ringworm was definitely caused by a fungoid infection as probably were some forms of itch. Alteration of diet had been suggested in a letter to Lancet in 1835.<sup>115</sup> This treatment was adopted at Kidderminster in 1841.<sup>116</sup> Whilst this certainly may have improved the general health of inmate children, it probably did little to cure ringworm. Sufferers were often segregated. At King's Norton in 1840 the Guardians refused to remove ringworm sufferers from the workhouse.<sup>117</sup> Most unions attempted isolation in the workhouse, a treatment that generally proved ineffective as the disease recurred. As with itch, chance alteration of climate reduced the virulence of the complaint, but doctors continued to use sulphuret of potash baths as recommended in Lancet in 1835,<sup>118</sup> a treatment similar to the one that killed the boy at

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115. MOSS, William, Letter, Lancet, 4th. April 1835, Vol. II. p.13. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

116. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. October 1841. P.R.O. MH12. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 3.

117. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd May 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14039. B.P.L. File Fl.

118. THOMPSON, A. "Lecture", Lancet, 9th. May 1835. pp.189. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

Bromsgrove.<sup>119</sup> Other medical officers used tincture of opium,<sup>120</sup> sulphuric acid washes<sup>121</sup> and lemon juice,<sup>122</sup> which were all suggested in Lancet in 1835 assuming the disease was allied to scurvy. As late as 1861 at Kidderminster<sup>123</sup> fresh air walks were the only treatment prescribed for ringworm. Isolation, hygiene and improved diet appeared to prevent children from contracting ringworm and itch most successfully.

Ophthalmia, an infection of the conjunctiva of the eye, was not reported in any county workhouse before 1846. The complaint may have existed previously, however. It occurred at Martley in 1847.<sup>124</sup> Elsewhere in the country it was a problem, however, with a large medical literature developing on the topic. Blood letting was recommended as a treatment in Lancet in 1835.<sup>125</sup> The disease appeared to caused concern not because of its distressing physical effects, but because as it recurred "again and again....the eyesight was permanently damaged; and the child who might otherwise have been

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119. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS MINUTES, 31st January 1842. Op. cit.

120. STEWART, L., Lancet, 28th. November 1835. pp.337-8. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

121. CLIFTON, Lancet, ibid.

122. HEADLAND, Lancet, ibid.

123. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. February 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 14.

124. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. March 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14082.

125. WARDROP, "Clinical Observations on Various Diseases", Lancet, 3rd. January 1835. p.515. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

lifted out of pauperism, would be dependent on State relief throughout life".<sup>126</sup> The disease thus gained an importance beyond its distressing physical effects. The severest outbreak of this extremely contagious disease was at King's Norton in 1855,<sup>127</sup> although it was most persistent at Martley in 1857.<sup>128</sup> It was said there to have been caused by "the unhealthy position of the workhouse". The children were temporarily removed in the hope of effecting a cure. Adults must also have been afflicted, but such cases were unrecorded. J.T. Graves the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner visited and inspected the workhouse. He concluded that the disease was caused by ammonia generated from "urine left overnight in the sleeping rooms" which were unventilated. The children's education was also inspected by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner on this occasion, it being found that the children were understandably learning nothing because their eyesight was so impaired. The schoolteacher's certificate was suspended.<sup>129</sup> Two months later J.T. Graves expressed satisfaction that the situation had improved. Urine was no longer left in the bedrooms in uncovered dishes and whilst ophthalmia did recur it was never a severe

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126. LIVEING, S., "A Nineteenth Century Teacher", 1928, Quoted by Webb, English Poor Law History, Part II. Vol.1. Op. cit. pp.283-4.

127. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 17th. October 1855. P.R.O. MH12. 14042. B.P.L. File F1.

128. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. March 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 14085.

129. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. July 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14086.

problem in the union again. It occurred at Kidderminster almost continuously between 1863 and 1865.<sup>130</sup> In December 1864 it was so severe that the schoolmaster was dismissed; "Because the boys were incapable of doing school work." The complaint was treated with cod liver oil and an altered diet.<sup>131</sup> Sunlight in the childrens' rooms was now blamed for the outbreak<sup>132</sup> with the windows being whitewashed to prevent this. The disease abated, but in spite of this the Medical Officer was called upon to explain his "extravagant treatment" of his patients. He insisted that it was "to the economy of the ratepayers in general" to have the disease cured. The disease did not recur at Kidderminster. As early as 1851 an article in Lancet had pointed to "wretched hygiene conditions" as the root cause of the disease, suggesting that improved hygiene would "arrest the problem."<sup>133</sup> Thus the diligent application of hygiene measures reduced the problem. Towels were now marked with the pauper's number and cross infection was reduced. Undoubtedly ophthalmia like itch was a problem

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130. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 27th. September 1864, 12th. September 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc b251. Acc. 403. Par. 17.

131. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 31st. January 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par.17.

132. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. November 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 17.

133. Lancet, "Observations on Epidemic Ophthalmia", 3rd. May 1851. p.489. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

outside the workhouse, but the deleterious effects of the disease were certainly accentuated by communal living.

#### **viii. Pauper Infants: A Vulnerable Class.**

Medical science developed sporadically in the period 1834 to 1871 and anaesthetics and aseptic surgery were both developed in this period, although the medical profession was sometimes reluctant to use new techniques. It preferred to rely on tried and tested methods. There was thus a great disparity in the treatment given by doctors for the same diseases. Problems of diagnosis complicated the matter further, a situation highlighted in a Circular from the Poor Law Commission in 1844 which asked for "apparent cause of death".<sup>134</sup> The Order of 1847 stated that a standard "statistical nosology used by the Registrar General"<sup>135</sup> to record deaths should be used. Mortality records for children exist for Evesham, Shipston-on-Stour, Stourbridge and Worcester Unions in 1841 (See Table 4.1), but no distinction was made between deaths inside and outside the workhouse.<sup>136</sup> Tuberculosis which was normally considered to be highly contagious was surprisingly rare amongst pauper children, but the disease may have been considered inevitable and very

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134. P.L.C., Order, 4th. January 1844.

135. HODGKINSON, Op cit. p. 125.

136. These statistics include all children given Medical Relief, either as indoor or outdoor relief.

TABLE 4.1.

CAUSE OF DEATH IN INMATE CHILDREN IN 4 POOR LAW UNIONS  
IN 1841.

## "Apparent Cause of Death".

Marasmus.	15.	Decline	1.
Atrophy.	3.	Fits and Haemorrhage.	1.
Fever.	7.	Smallpox.	1.
Consumption.	5.	Erysipelas.	1.
Scrofula.	5.	Measles.	1.
Debility.	4.	(W)Hooping Cough.	1.
Inflamed Lungs.	2.	Hydrocephalus.	1.
Mesenteric. (Typhoid ?)	2.	Aphtha.	1.
Burned to death.	1.	No cause.	31.

TOTAL DEATHS IN CHILDREN .....80.

## AGE AT DEATH.

Up to one month.	9.	6 to 9 years.	5.
Up to 1 year.	32.	9 to 12 years.	2.
1 to 3 years.	15.	12 to 16 years.	2.
3 to 6 years.	9.	No age given.	6.

TOTAL DEATHS OF CHILDREN.....80.

SOURCE: Boards of Guardians' Minute Books for 4 Unions.<sup>137</sup>

difficult to cure. Thus, even if diagnosed tuberculosis was probably left untreated and unrecorded. All fatal

137. BOARDS OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, Evesham 3rd. June 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 13998, Shipston on Stour, 4th. May 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 14116. Stourbridge, 20th May 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 14135. Worcester, 22nd. May 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 14203.

cases of "consumption" (respiratory tuberculosis) were recorded in Stourbridge, possibly because environmental factors caused this distribution. Wasting diseases were only common in Worcester, although here there was insufficient evidence to make an objective assessment of whether environmental factors were an influence. At Shipston-on-Stour the "Cause of Death" column was left uncompleted, possibly indicating circumspection in diagnosis. Interestingly, in spite of relatively high infant and child mortality rates the workhouses were physically safe places. In the thirty seven years surveyed only one inmate child was killed, when a boy was burned to death at Stourbridge in 1841.<sup>138</sup> Death rate was greatest amongst infants and diminished as the child approached adulthood, illustrating the trend in the statistics compiled in 1836.<sup>139</sup> These showed that Worcestershire was slightly above the national average in terms of the death rate of infants under 5 years old. 22.9% of males and 20.2% of females died within the first five years from birth compared with the average for England and Wales of 22.5% and 19.9% respectively. It has been suggested regarding mortality in society as a whole that; "The incidence of infant deaths was highest among the poor and lowest among the comfortable".<sup>140</sup> The highest death rate in all

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138. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. May 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 14135. W.C.R.O.

139. EDMONDS, T.R., "Mortality of Infants in England", Lancet, 30th. July 1836. p. 691. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

140. SMITH, Op. cit. pp.65.

classes were among illegitimates. Armstrong's work on York between 1841 and 1851<sup>141</sup> indicated a similar trend, although there was no attempt here to distinguish pauper deaths. The poorest working class on the margins of pauperism undoubtedly had the highest mortality rates among infants and children. Some of these were saved from death by being inmates of the workhouse. "Marasmus", a wasting disease, was the major cause of infant deaths in the four unions identified. The conditions were probably worsened by the inadequacy of the diet of the mothers who were ineffective in suckling their offspring. Thus infants got inadequate nourishment from their mothers' milk. Infant mortality in workhouses was inevitably inflated by the adult women's wards being used as a lying in hospital for the confinement of poor women at childbirth. This meant<sup>142</sup> that women had to accept a pauper status to obtain the facility. A "stillborn" child or one that had died soon after birth was recorded as a "pauper death" and as such deaths were generally regarded as inevitable no "cause of death" was recorded. Such infants were considered vulnerable, their expectation of life was extremely low.

#### **ix. Medical Officers' Inefficiencies.**

George Cornewall-Lewis made the point in 1844 that;

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141. ARMSTRONG, M., Stability and Change in an English County Town 1841 to 1851, C.U.P., 1974. p.57.

142. SMITH, Op. cit. pp.47-55.



"From so large a number of attendances 717,200....it was only reasonable to expect some instances of neglect should occur".<sup>143</sup> When the huge size of some of the county's medical districts was added neglect appeared likely. Thus medical officers neglected their child pauper patients and sometimes this neglect led to the death of the patient. The Guardians could suspend a doctor for negligence. At Martley in 1846<sup>144</sup> a doctor was found guilty of "shameful neglect" when two boys, aged three and five years old, died of scarlet fever after he refused to visit them. This charge was substantiated and unusually the doctor resigned.<sup>145</sup> Sometimes, however, a Medical Officer simply sent medicines, as at Pershore in 1851,<sup>146</sup> when a girl patient aged five years old died. The Guardians found a charge of neglect against the Medical Officer proved and they recorded their "disapprobation", but the Medical Officer continued in office. A child died from burns at Shipston-on-Stour in 1851<sup>147</sup> when he had been refused attendance. The doctor was censured by the Coroner, but

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143. S.C. ON THE POOR LAWS, 1844. Evidence of George Cornwall-Lewis. Quoted by HODGKINSON, Op cit. p. 132.

144. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. April 1846. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

145. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. May 1846. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

146. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 21st. January 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 7.

147. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. May 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14119.

the Guardians did not hold an enquiry. This same Medical Officer refused to attend another child in 1856.<sup>148</sup> He was called again on the next day and stated at a subsequent enquiry; "I immediately attended with leeches and c.", but the child died half an hour before he arrived. This Medical Officer's actions were regretted, but no blame was found in them. At Droitwich in 1857 another child died because of the inaction of the Medical Officer. Here he was "found guilty of practical, but not intentional neglect."<sup>149</sup> It seemed impossible for a Medical Officer to be dismissed for neglect no matter how culpable he was. For instance, at Hindlip in 1870<sup>150</sup> a girl was neglected for ten days, and the doctor sent medicine only on the eleventh day, but when the girl died there was still no action against the Medical Officer. Such pauper child patients were clearly "less eligible" in these cases, with private patients, no matter how poor, treated ahead of them. The relative seriousness of the illness appeared immaterial.

The onerous system of medical tickets was sometimes blamed for these cases, but it was surely not the Poor Law Authority's intention that pauper patients should be

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148. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. April 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 14120.

149. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 16th. December 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 7.

150. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 11th. September 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 13941. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 13.

neglected in this way. Medical tickets were supplied to the pauper by the Relieving Officer, theoretically on demand, and when taken to the Medical Officer treatment was given in return for the ticket. At Worcester in 1871<sup>151</sup> it was reported in Lancet that the Relieving Officer left an aged pauper to give out medical tickets, the doctor being unaware of this. He was also not conscious that some individuals not entitled to treatment were receiving it, but it was the doctor who was charged with neglect. Lancet claimed that he had no charge to answer. He was acquitted.<sup>152</sup> From 1846<sup>153</sup> treatment could be given by unqualified medical assistants. The Poor Law Board apparently accepted assistants as a cheaper alternative to raising the salaries of Medical Officers to attract applicants. A doctor writing on medical matters commented in 1887 that "were it not for this system....the poor would not be placed in the hands of incompetents, and the Board of Guardians would not be enabled to obtain Officers at the prices which are but too often merely nominal".<sup>154</sup> Contemporary editions of both Lancet and The British Medical Journal supported this view. Often medical officers refused to accept responsibility for

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151. LANCET Leading Article, 1st. April 1871. p. 457. B.U.L. (B.M.L.)

152. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th April 1871. P.R.O. MH12. 14212.

153. P.L.C., Order, 1846. 13th. Annual Report. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1748.

154. LAFFAN, T. The Medical Profession, Dublin, 1887. p.76. B.U.L. (B.M.L.) Ref.

neglect or incorrect treatment by their assistants. At Stourbridge in 1855 an assistant gave inadequate treatment to a seriously ill infant. The child died, but an enquiry found the assistant responsible. The doctor who had "over many years performed his duties in an exemplary manner"<sup>155</sup> was considered blameless. In another case at Kidderminster in 1858 an assistant was "guilty of grievous neglect",<sup>156</sup> but because he had left the employ of the doctor the case was not proceeded with. In 1868<sup>157</sup> in an attempt control the use of unqualified assistants, particularly in "thinly populated areas", the Poor Law Board issued a circular. Thus, it appeared virtually impossible to attach blame to a doctor or his assistant for the death of a patient. This was probably equally true for poor non-pauper patients, but local newspapers sometimes took up pauper cases<sup>158</sup> because public money was involved in their treatment. The Medical Officer still went unpunished even in these clear cases of neglect. The opinion has been expressed, however, that "Nearly all cases of complaint against doctors were centred on neglect rather

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155. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. February 1855. P.R.O. MH12. 14141.

156. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 29th. June 1858 and 10th. August 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14141. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 11.

157. P.L.B., Circular, 2nd. April 1868, in 21st Annual Report, P.R.O. ZHCl. 3303.

158. WORCESTER HERALD, 13th. May 1865, 31st. May 1865 and 31st. August 1867. W.P.L. (Microfilm), Berrow's Newspapers Archive.

than malpractice",<sup>159</sup> but neglect killed just as surely as did maltreatment. Importantly, however, the Poor Law Authority did monitor the medical treatment of pauper patients.

The Union Medical Officer treated the whole range of diseases and medical conditions afflicting the pauper populations. He was, however, usually reluctant to use surgical techniques. Until the era of anaesthetics and aseptic surgery many techniques were too hazardous whether the patient was a pauper or not. Only in dire emergency was surgery used, an additional fee being sometimes paid in these cases. At Droitwich in 1853 the additional fingers and toes of a child were removed being considered an emergency because the condition was "the work of the devil".<sup>160</sup> As the child was under ten weeks old an additional fee was payable. In another case, at Kidderminster in 1854,<sup>161</sup> a finger was amputated from a boy after an accident, but no fee was allowable in this case. A fee was paid at Pershore in 1854 to "repair a hernia" in a boy. Unusually this was done "under chloroform".<sup>162</sup> Surgery was also used at

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159. HODGKINSON, Op cit. p. 420.

160. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. October 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 13935. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 6.

161. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. August 1854. P.R.O. MH12. 14021. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 10.

162. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1854. P.R.O. MH12. 14107. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par 7.

Pershore in 1865,<sup>163</sup> to remove a bladder stone from a child. At Droitwich all cases treated by the Medical Officer were recorded between 1865 and 1870.<sup>164</sup> A fracture was treated using surgery, as was a case of peritonitis. Prolonged illness appeared rare in pauper children, but there was one case of hydrocephalus and one of a serious heart complaint. There appeared little difference between pauper and non-pauper poor regarding the alleviation of serious medical conditions caused by physical abnormalities, but it did appear that living outside the workhouse was more dangerous than inside it as the incidence of accidents was greater.

#### x. Hospital Treatment.

Parsimony was usually the major consideration of Poor Law medicine, decisions being made on the basis of

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163. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 11th. October 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14108. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 8.

164. Diseases and complaints treated by the Medical Officer of Droitwich Union.

January 1865 to December 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 18939, 18940, 18941. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Pars. 11, 12 and 13.

Abscess.	Diseased Ankle.	Nechrous.
Aphonia.	Ecynema.	Peritonitis.
Biliousness (Hepatic).	Erysipelas.	Pneumonia.
Bronchitis.	Febris.	Rheumatic Fever.
Cardiac Condition.	Fits.	Rheumatism.
Cervical Abscess.	Fracture.	Scabies.
Cold.	Glandular Swelling.	Simple Fever.
Cold Abscess.	Hip Joint Disease.	Skin Eruption.
Congestion and Cold.	Hydrocephalus.	Spino Bifida.
Constipation.	Manition.	Strumous Wrist.
Cough and Cold.	Low Fever.	Tonsilitis
Diarrhoea.	Worms.	

saving money. The decisions of some Guardians to subscribe to hospitals were based on this. Thus Dudley Union subscribed £2 -2 -0d to Birmingham Eye Infirmary and £21 -0 -0d to Birmingham General Hospital in 1846.<sup>165</sup> This was repeated in subsequent years. This very unusual large subscription made hospital facilities available, but they were never used by indoor paupers. They may have been used by paupers in receipt of outdoor relief, but this went undocumented. Normally subscriptions were between £2 -0 -0d and £5 -0 -0d. Thus King's Norton subscribed £2 -0 -0d to the Birmingham Children's Hospital in 1869.<sup>166</sup> Most unions in north Worcestershire used hospitals in Birmingham, but specialist institutions further afield were sometimes used to treat children. Such cases were paid for individually. The Upton-on-Severn Guardians paid for a boy, aged six years old, with a burned throat to be equipped with a special instrument to aid his breathing.<sup>167</sup> Sometimes children were sent for sea bathing treatment. Thus a boy suffering from a "strumous wrist" at Kidderminster was sent to Scarborough in 1868.<sup>168</sup> Mr Brinton, the carpet manufacture and Chairman of the Board of Guardians, paid the boy's railway fare.

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165. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. December 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 13964. D.P.L.

166. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. September 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 14045. B.P.L. File F1.

167. UPTON-ON-SEVERN BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. February 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14189.

168. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. May 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14024. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 19.

The Guardians paid four shillings per week to support the boy there. This appeared to be an erosion of "Less Eligibility" because few poor children in similar conditions outside the workhouse would have been sent away for treatment as their parents would have been unable to afford it. Acceptance of Poor Relief was the only way such treatment could be obtained.

Occasionally workhouses were used as convalescent homes for poor private patients. In 1839 at Kidderminster<sup>169</sup> a boy who had a leg amputated and was placed in the workhouse to recover and his parents were charged 3 shillings per week expenses for this. Soon after this in the same union a boy's arm was amputated, he too was placed in the workhouse at his parents' expense which the Guardians allowed.<sup>170</sup> A minute recording these facts was sent to the Poor Law Commission who made no comment on this irregular arrangement, but the practice ceased. It was virtually unknown elsewhere in the county. Only at Droitwich in 1868<sup>171</sup> was another child convalescing in the workhouse. A boy's hand had been amputated and he was placed in the workhouse, but no payment was made and the boy eventually became a permanent inmate.

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169. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. August 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

170. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. September 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

171. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. April 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 13940. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 12.



Public indifference to the treatment of paupers was altered in 1865 by what the Webbs called an "outburst of public indignation"<sup>172</sup> at workhouse scandals. Edward Smith, a leading dietician was sent with a Workhouse Inspector, H.B. Farnall, to inspect all workhouse infirmaries. The Annual Report of 1866-67 reported; "The sick wards of the workhouses were originally provided for cases of the paupers of the workhouse who might be attacked by illness; and not as a State Hospital into which the sick poor of the country would be received for medical care".<sup>173</sup> There was a fear that the deterrent effect of the workhouse was being eroded because paupers were willing to accept the privations of the workhouse in return for medical relief. The indication in county unions was that this was an overstatement of the situation as there was little evidence that county workhouse infirmaries, where they existed, were being used in this way. In Parliament in 1867 it was stated that "the evils complained of have mainly arisen from workhouse management, which must to a great extent be of a deterrent character, having been applied to the sick, who are not proper objects for such a system".<sup>174</sup> The system changed to accommodate such people, but this did not happen until after the abolition of the Poor Law

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172. WEBB, English Poor Law History, Op. cit. Vol. I, Part II, p.319.

173. P.L.B., 17th. Annual Report 1866-7. P.R.O. ZHC1. 2962.

174. HANSARD, 1867, Vol. clxxxv. c.163.

Board in 1871<sup>175</sup> and its replacement by the Local Government Board.

#### **xi. Conclusions.**

The major tenets of the New Poor Law, the principles of "National Uniformity" and "Less Eligibility" had been adhered to initially after 1834, but almost immediately there was a realisation amongst experienced local Poor Law officials that uniformity was impossible to attain in the case of medical treatment. Each case was different and each doctor differed in his treatment of the same ailment. This was seen as desirable, and yet the Central Poor Law Administration appeared to desire uniformity. The principle proved unworkable and was quietly dropped, except when communicating with the Poor Law Commission. Gradually Assistant Poor Law Commissioners became less aware of the need for uniformity, although now what was required was for Medical Officers to stay within their budgets for "union drugs". Because there were few sick wards in county workhouses ill children usually remained in their normal wards, where treatment was seldom uniform with that given to adults.

Workhouse Medical Officers appeared ready to prescribe whatever was necessary, in their view, to treat the child's illness and this was not questioned. From this

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175. The Poor Law Board was replaced by the Local Government Board in 1871.

standpoint and many others the inmate child was "more eligible" than his non-pauper contemporary outside. He had better treatment, more medicines, rudimentary nursing, regular clean bed-linen, regular attendance by the Medical Officer and an improved diet. These sorts of conditions would certainly not have been available to independent labourers' children outside the workhouse because of costs. The workhouse itself conferred advantage on all pauper inmates, but particularly on children. Diseases that killed children, such as measles and scarlet fever did not strike inside the workhouse as much as they did outside. Similarly epidemic diseases were virtually unknown inside workhouses. The institution acted as an isolating agency, and most Guardians were swift to close the workhouse to further admissions if epidemic disease was present in the union area. The workhouses were also generally much safer for children. An independent water supply that was clean, and proved so by a rudimentary biological test, also protected the inmates from water-borne diseases.

There was, before about 1850, one class of diseases that did inflict pauper children more than poor children outside the workhouse and these were known as "institutional diseases". They included the skin complaints called itch, ringworm, scaldhead and scabies, together with the troublesome eye infection ophthalmia and these were an almost constant nuisance in many

workhouses. In a few cases they became serious and caused removal of children from the workhouse. Ophthalmia at its worst caused temporary blindness. It was eventually discovered that these "institutional diseases" succumbed to strict hygiene measures. Thus, when these became normal workhouse practice the diseases disappeared. Excepting for these "institutional diseases", early in the New Poor Law era, inmate children were again "more eligible" than their contemporaries outside the workhouse, although this was not because of a conscious decision in this case, it was just fortuitous.

The insane, imbecile and idiot child was clearly at a great advantage over similar poor children outside the workhouse. As the treatment of mental conditions became more effective and lunatic asylums ceased to be mere pens for the insane the benefit of the workhouse inmate child increased. After 1845 the workhouses and their mentally infirm charges were inspected. Again there was an improvement in the conditions for inmate children suffering from mental infirmity. All too often children outside the workhouses were merely kept in a squalid untreated state.

From the evidence available it was difficult to discern a difference in treatment in rural as opposed to urban

workhouses in Worcestershire. All medical officers varied so much in the way they treated inmate patients that any pattern was not perceived. As with other aspects of "treatment" in the workhouse the longer paupers stayed the greater the advantage they gained.

Very soon after its inception, medical relief to inmate children had been freed from the strictures of the two basic tenets of Poor Law administration. The definition of the pauper child's plight had altered and this allowed medical treatment to alter. This appeared to conform to Himmelfarb's suggestion regarding the changing definition of poverty.<sup>176</sup> However, they were still in a "total institution" and there must therefore be a problem in equating the gain in health, protection to disease afforded by incarceration in the workhouse and the improved medical treatment received to their loss of liberty.

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176. HIMMELFARB, G., The Idea of Poverty, Faber, 1984.

## CHAPTER 5.

### THE WORKHOUSE STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN - THE CHAPLAIN AND THE SCHOOL STAFF.

#### i. Principles.

It has been suggested earlier that education was considered fundamental to the treatment of hereditary pauperism. The linking of education with "pauperism, crime, public order and economic and social discipline in general"<sup>1</sup> have been suggested because; "These were all issues which orthodox opinion designated 'moral' and with which, therefore, education could deal". This relates well to recent notions about a morality being imposed on the working classes by the middle class<sup>2</sup> as was discussed in Chapter 3. This has been referred to as "social control" as mid-nineteenth century Poor Law activists "thought instinctively of controlling the lives of those underneath them".<sup>3</sup> These measures were truly paternalistic, resulting in "the prostration of the masses to those classes above them".<sup>4</sup> Such a situation was encouraged and implemented by the workhouse staff, who have been referred to as "Social Police".<sup>5</sup> "Social control" was to remain a major focus in the treatment of pauperism throughout the period to 1871, being considered relevant to children who were

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1. JOHNSON, R. p.10.

2. HIMMELFARB, G. The Idea of Poverty, Faber, 1984.

3. ROBERTS, D. Paternalism in Early Victorian England Croom-Helm, 1979, pp.61-2.

4. SIMON, B. Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870 Lawrence and Wishart, 1974. p.223.

5 DONAJGRODSKI, A. J. "Social Police and the Bureaucratic Elite", in Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain, Croom-Helm, 1977, pp.51-77.

most in danger from the contagious scourge of pauperism. They were to be protected from this infection by education, religious instruction, and later industrial training. Reports to the Poor Law Inquiry Commission in 1834 assumed that an educational scheme was essential to preventing the spread of pauperism, thus "healing the wounds" inflicted by the Old Poor Law. As a lack of education was one explanation of the pauper's parlous state, providing education was regarded as remedial action that would thus benefit adult as well as child paupers. The workhouse regime was intended by Jeremy Bentham<sup>6</sup> who designed it, to create a controlled atmosphere in a closed and "total institution", which has been defined by Goffman as "a place of residence and work where a large number of like situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life".<sup>7</sup>

The workhouse schoolteachers were obviously of great importance in the educational process, but opinions expressed about them in the 1830's were not generally complimentary. They were seen as ignorant and lazy and not worthy of the important task they were set. However, at this time all elementary schoolteachers, including those outside the workhouse, were similarly regarded.

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6. BENTHAM, J. "Panopticon or Inspection House", in *Works*, 1840, Vol.IV. p.39. B.U.L.

7. GOFFMAN, E. Asylums, Penguin, 1968, Introduction.

The Poor Law authorities would not pay higher salaries to the few qualified and trained teachers that existed, so that the workhouses had to cope with inadequate school staff. Obviously inadequate teachers needed close supervision, a responsibility of the chaplain whose appointment was seen by Sir Francis Head in 1836 as giving "dignity to the whole arrangement".<sup>8</sup> It has been suggested recently that the chaplain "Unlike the medical officer, was a professional man of standing",<sup>9</sup> but in spite of this the epithet "Sunday gaoler"<sup>10</sup> was appropriately used to describe his function. The Assistant Poor Law Commissioner had oversight of the school and its staff, but an inspector of workhouse schools was appointed in 1837. He was responsible for inspecting the workhouse school annually, for determining the level of certificate available to the teacher and hence the level of government grant payable. He reported to the Central Poor Law Authority, with a copy being sent to the Privy Council Committee on Education after 1846. The inspection role of H.M.I. came to be the most important influence on the improvement of workhouse teaching.

#### **ii. Officers' Responsibilities.**

In small unions such as those in Worcestershire the

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8. CROWTHER, M. A. The Workhouse System 1834 to 1929 Batsford, 1981. p.38. Citing JACKMAN, S. Galloping Head 1958, p.63.

9. CROWTHER, Ibid. p.127.

10. CROWTHER, Ibid. p.128.



chaplain was responsible for ensuring that the school was regularly attended by the Master and Mistress, that the "youths and girls [were] properly instructed and set to work....[so that]....care [was] taken to fit them to be useful members of the community." A Poor Law Commission Order in 1835<sup>11</sup> stated the "Duties of the Schoolmaster and Schoolmistress....[were]....to instruct the boys and girls of the house....and assist the Master and Mistress of the House in the performance of their several duties, and in the maintenance of order and due subordination in the house." Instruction was to be given "for three working hours every day".<sup>12</sup> The order continued, that teachers were "to ensure that they [the children] were instructed in reading, writing and the principles of the Christian Religion", but whilst the chaplain's ability to comment on the religious aspects of the curriculum was obvious, his competence in other respects varied. The Poor Law Commission made rules which were regarded centrally as inviolable, although locally they were regarded merely as guidelines, open to interpretation. The order setting out teachers' duties was repeated in 1844, presumably to emphasise its importance. The teachers were to "instruct the boys and girls according to the instructions expressed....[and to]....Regulate the discipline and

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11. P.L.C. Order, 2nd. March 1835. P.L.C. 1st. Annual Report. (1st.) 1835. H.L.L.

12. P.L.C. Order, 2nd. March 1835. Ibid. . Art. XXXVI.

organisation of the school and industrial and moral training of the children, subject to the instructions of the Guardians".<sup>13</sup> Guardians apparently controlled education, although the chaplain's influence was great, a situation that persisted until after the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws in 1909.

The schoolmaster's duties were exclusively specified at Kidderminster in 1848,<sup>14</sup> but the schoolmistress there was expected to undertake duties outside those laid down by the Poor Law Board.<sup>15</sup> The H.M.I. considered that this teacher "performed duties incompatible with her situation",<sup>16</sup> he explained that her duties outside the schoolroom were to deal only with female children, to supply "such attendance [to these children] as is necessary to their bodily comfort". At Kidderminster she had been required to do duties other than these until the H.M.I.'s intervention prevented this. Later, in 1849<sup>17</sup> the Poor Law Board insisted that school staff were "regularly to reside in the workhouse and to devote the whole of their time to the duties of the office". A system of double insurance was used to make sure that

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13. P.L.C. Order, 4th. January 1844. P.L.C. 10th. Annual Report. (10th.) 1844. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1493. Art. 77.

14. Ibid.

15. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. December 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 7.

16. Ibid.

17. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 27th. August 1849. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 7.

the Poor Law Board's opinions expressed in orders and regulations were adhered to. Orders sent to Guardians were sometimes questioned, as at Dudley where Guardians incessantly did this. The Central Poor Law Authority sent copies of orders directly to workhouse officers, usually in strengthened form, placing officers as employees of the Guardians in a difficult position, but placing further pressure on Guardians to comply.

### iii. The Chaplain.

The chaplain was the most influential officer because whilst he was subordinate to the master of the workhouse, in hierarchical terms, his social position and his social influence was much greater. As spiritual pastor he had great power which he exerted over Guardians as well as over Workhouse Officers and inmates. The office of chaplain was initially not considered important, however, because in 1836 the chaplain needed to be appointed "only if the Guardians think fit".<sup>18</sup> Where a chaplain was appointed he was to catechise the children and also to "state the general progress and state of the children".<sup>19</sup> His duties were to increase, however, as in 1837,<sup>20</sup> immediately after the

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18. P.L.C. Consolidated Order, 19th. December 1836. P.L.C. 3rd. Annual Report. 1837. P.R.O. ZHC1. 11.

19. P.L.C. Order, 2nd. March 1835. Op cit.

20. P.L.C. Order, 2nd. December 1837. P.L.C. 4th. Annual Report. 1838. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1295.

introduction of school inspection, he was given responsibility for the conduct of the school. He was now considered essential because he assessed and reported on the abilities and efficiency of the school staff. He was often ill equipped to do this, however, because he seldom had much knowledge of elementary education, although his ability in this respect improved with experience. The chaplain's judgement must, however, always have been overlain by moral and religious considerations. It has reasonably been claimed that J. Kay, who had been an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner in East Anglia and who became first Permanent Secretary at the Education Department, "developed the function of the chaplain in the workhouse rules....into a more active supervisory and advisory role".<sup>21</sup> The influence of Anglicanism was therefore increased in Poor Law administration. For instance the chaplain's choice of reading material for the workhouse school was invariably very restricted, usually being religious in character. He was also able to ensure that his personal ideology was dominant, having almost complete control over the curriculum. Even after inspection of Workhouse Schools was instituted in 1837<sup>22</sup> it was difficult for H.M.I. and Guardians alike to circumvent the entrenched and established chaplain determined to maintain his influence over 'his' school.

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21. DIGBY, A. Pauper Palaces R.K.P. 1978. p.184.

22. P.L.C. Order. 2nd. December 1837. Op cit.

Unlike the school staff the chaplain was not open to inspection. At Kidderminster in 1839 the chaplain purchased "elementary books for the instruction of the children."<sup>23</sup> At Worcester Workhouse in 1840,<sup>24</sup> he alone was responsible for all books allowed. Only at Tenbury Wells in 1840<sup>25</sup> did the chaplain consult other local clergymen about instructing the inmate children in religious matters, although in most cases the chaplain took autocratic decisions. Whilst early school inspections revealed workhouse schools to be in a poor state, it was thought by the Central Authority that the chaplain could be relied upon to ensure a minimal standard of education. He was considered controllable because he usually followed orders and regulations assiduously. He thus became a key member of the bureaucracy controlling the workhouse school, although he sometimes disagreed with H.M.I. about individual schools. The hierarchy amongst workhouse officers became most apparent here as one level of officer inspected his subordinates. The chaplain inspected the school staff, having the power to order their dismissal, a situation deliberately created by the Central Poor Law Authority. They therefore gained control of workhouse

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23. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. October 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

24. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. July 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14203.

25. TENBURY WELLS BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 7th. April 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14169. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 413. Par. 3.

officers in a way far more effective than by an annual inspection, because the chaplain was ever present. He ensured that the Central Authority's regulations were adopted.

Because of the chaplain's influence, religious matters regarding inmates were of great importance. On admission the pauper's religious denomination was entered in the "Creed Register" and all aspects of religious experience in the workhouse were determined by that entry. The pauper was protected against proselytism, but the Anglican Church appeared to be at an advantage, with the Creed Register sometimes being treated cavalierly, so that individuals not professing any faith were recorded as Anglican. Once completed it was difficult to change; thus only fervent Nonconformists and Roman Catholics escaped being classified "Anglican" and being ministered to by the Anglican chaplain. The chaplain at Kidderminster in 1838<sup>26</sup> determined that Cotterill's Book of Prayers be used in daily prayers for all inmates, except those who had proved that they were not Anglican. The chaplain thus determined that, "his will be done" on religious matters.

"Social class control" was demonstrated by the chaplain, a member of the middle class with tremendous power over

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26. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 16th. October 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14016. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

other workhouse officers. He also largely determined the conditions under which inmate pauper children were kept. The chaplain was usually a minor cleric, often the curate of the parish in which the workhouse stood, who for relatively light duties was paid £60 to £80 salary. This was a similar sum to that paid to the workhouse master and about three times the salary of the schoolmistress. Sometimes the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner had his judgement overruled by a particularly vociferous and forceful chaplain, who was particularly influential in determining the Guardians' attitude towards members of the school staff. Schoolteachers were initially appointed on one month's trial being assessed by the chaplain at the end of that time. If they were satisfactory they were then appointed permanently. The Visiting Committee at Kidderminster in 1844<sup>27</sup> was satisfied with the schoolmistress appointed, but the chaplain found fault stating; "I think it would be as well for them [the children] to continue school till half past four for this month instead of running about the yard wearing out shoe leather and making a great noise".<sup>28</sup> The Guardians inevitably agreed with the chaplain, ordering the schoolmistress to work the

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27. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. July 1844. P.R.O. MH12. 14018. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 5.

28. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. October 1844. P.R.O. MH12. 14018. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 5.

new hours. Sometimes the chaplain assessed a schoolteacher more favourably than the inspector; therefore at Pershore in 1848<sup>29</sup> a schoolmistress was considered very satisfactory by the chaplain, but she was only given a lowly Certificate of Permission and a grant of £8 by the H.M.I. He was clearly not satisfied. The influential chaplain's report later stated; "Since she has occupied the situation she has advanced the children both in religious and similar knowledge".<sup>30</sup> The chaplain's opinion was probably reasonably founded because the teacher's grant was subsequently raised. The chaplain at Bromsgrove in 1852,<sup>31</sup> again supported a schoolteacher criticised by H.M.I. He withheld her certificate. The Guardians were told to dismiss her, but the chaplain supported her, regarding the report as unfair. He demanded a second inspection, but H.M.I. responded that whilst he was anxious to do justice to the school, "if the evidence of defective teaching remains as at his last visit he should regret his inability to alter his present judgement".<sup>32</sup> No grant

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29. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. September 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 4.

30. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. March 1849. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 4.

31. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 8th. September 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

32. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 13th. October 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.



was paid for that year,<sup>33</sup> with the schoolmistress being paid by the Guardians. In this case the chaplain's influence kept the schoolmistress in her post and a year later<sup>34</sup> H.M.I. reported a great improvement and a grant was now paid.<sup>35</sup> The situation was repeated in 1857,<sup>36</sup> when the chaplain again defended the schoolmistress, because "she was under the disadvantage of the frequent comings and goings of the workhouse children who were generally of a very tender age", which was the situation in most unions. The Visiting Committee again supported the chaplain's view, with the schoolmistress continuing in office until 1859.<sup>37</sup> Such a situation was not unique, as at Droitwich in 1862 the schoolmistress was refused a certificate "on account of the very unsatisfactory state of her school".<sup>38</sup> Here the chaplain and the Guardians both considered this unfair, finding the schoolmistress very satisfactory.<sup>39</sup> In spite of

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33. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 10th. November 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

34. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 24th. August 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

35. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 6th. November 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

36. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 3rd. November 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 13911. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

37. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 23rd. August 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 13911. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

38. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 20th. August 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

39. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 8th. October 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

this, H.M.I. withheld the grant for that year, but later in 1863, H.M.I. stated, "the children appear to me to have improved and made progress since my last visit, several can read and write fairly, and were correct in their sums".<sup>40</sup> A certificate was issued and a grant paid. In spite of the chaplain's vindication, the schoolmistress resigned within a year<sup>41</sup> because of improper behaviour with the porter. Although on these occasions the chaplain disagreed with H.M.I. usually the inspector's opinion was sustained. The Central Authority's policy was applied and thus there was likely to be an improvement in the standard of teaching.

Usually the chaplain had little expertise in the field of elementary education, but his opinion was extremely influential. H.M.I. had to accommodate the chaplain's opinion. At Bromsgrove in 1852<sup>42</sup> H.M.I. regarded the overcrowding of the schoolrooms as intolerable. To solve the problem the chaplain investigated the possibility of teaching boys and girls together, a solution considered inexpedient by the chaplain in a decision accepted by the Guardians, who unusually committed themselves to spending £1,500 on a new school, in spite of the fact

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40. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 25th. February 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

41. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 9th. March 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 13939. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

42. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 23rd. November 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

that the Poor Law Board would not have objected to the suggested arrangement. In contrast the mixing of boys and girls within a school was accepted at Kidderminster in 1869,<sup>43</sup> when the schoolmaster there resigned because of illness, there being too few boys at that time to justify a separate school. The chaplain at Droitwich in 1851<sup>44</sup> reported H.M.I. to the Poor Law Board for not inspecting the workhouse school, a charge H.M.I. denied. There was no further action taken, so that the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner had to rely on a chaplain's Report when there had been no recent visit by H.M.I. At Stourbridge in 1860, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner stated; "I have no other means of offering an opinion [other than]....the entries in the chaplain's Book, which are favourable to both schools".<sup>45</sup> At Dudley in 1857<sup>46</sup> the chaplain accompanied H.M.I. in inspecting the workhouse school, which was apparently insisted on by the independently minded Guardians. Occasionally the chaplain represented the schoolteacher's interests with the Guardians as at Pershore in 1851,<sup>47</sup> when the

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43. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. October 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 14024. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 20.

44. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 23rd. April 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 5.

45. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 27th. July 1860. P.R.O. MH12. 14143.

46. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 1st. January 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 13964. D.P.L.

47. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. March 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 5.

schoolmistress expressed doubts about sufficiency of time allowed for schooling. She was invited to the next Guardians' meeting to discuss the matter, being accompanied by the chaplain.<sup>48</sup> Only at Stourbridge was the chaplain's responsibility eroded by a School Committee. Such a committee was set up here in 1848.<sup>49</sup> It operated until 1871 but was unknown elsewhere in the county.

#### **iv. The Schoolmaster and Schoolmistress.**

The certificates given to workhouse teachers were determined by an annual inspection. H.M.I. awarded a certificate at one of three levels, in one of four categories (Efficiency, Competency, Probation and Permission.) "Competency" was the median standard of certificate for schoolmasters. The scale of certificates and the numbers of Worcestershire workhouse schoolteachers in each category is given in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 indicates that schoolmistresses were given marginally lower levels of certificate than were schoolmasters in 1855, with fewer men than women refused certificates. More women than men schoolteachers were given the least prestigious certificate - "Permission".

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48. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. March 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 5.

49. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 9th. October 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14138.

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TABLE 5.1.

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WORCESTERSHIRE WORKHOUSE TEACHERS' CERTIFICATES.  
1850 and 1857.

	1850	1855	
Efficiency.	7	12	
Competency.	19	29	
Probation.	46	33	
Permission.	12	8	
Refused.	18	11	

Source: J.C. Symons, 1855. Cited in the SC Report.  
1861-2. p.73.

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Nationally around 50% of schoolmasters attained this level, compared with about 33% of schoolmistresses. Intellectual competency was defined by the Privy Council Committee on Education in 1849 to be the ability "to read fluently, write from dictation and from memory, [and] work sums in the first four simple and compound rules of arithmetic",<sup>50</sup> but there was no attempt to estimate teaching ability.

Inspection by H.M.I. was conventionally presumed to have raised the standard of workhouse education. By 1850, when

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50. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 26th. April 1844. P.R.O. MH12. 14136.

TABLE 5.2.

Certificates Awarded to Schoolmistresses in  
Worcestershire Schools - 1849 to 1871.

UNION.	EFFICIENCY.			COMPETENCY.			PROBATION.			PERMISSION.			NONE.
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
EVESHAM. 30-08-66 7-01-68 22-06-68 18-06-69 13-07-70							*						
KIDDER- MINSTER. 28-02-50 7-04-57 28-09-58 14-06-59 19-03-61 20-10-61 29-08-62 26-10-63 6-09-64 6-02-66 2-03-69				*									*
KING'S NORTON. 10-04-61							*						
MARTLEY. 18-06-58 29-01-61 29-10-61 18-10-62 27-07-63 10-04-64 6-06-65 4-09-66 10-09-67 24-06-68 25-10-68 7-06-70 23-06-71					*								

TABLE 5.2 Continued

Certificates Awarded to Schoolmistresses in  
Worcestershire Schools - 1849 to 1871.

UNION.	EFFICIENCY.			COMPETENCY.			PROBATION.			PERMISSION.			NONE.
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
PERS- HORE. 13-03-49							*						
SHIPSTON ON STOUR 28-02-50 22-09-51 20-01-53 21-09-56 20-05-57 18-05-58 10-05-59 14-07-60 9-11-61 12-05-62 8-08-64 14-07-65 17-07-66 18-08-67 20-07-68 10-08-70 24-07-71													
STOUR- BRIDGE. 12-07-50 2-06-52 10-03-53 6-05-53 19-10-53 14-04-54 15-01-59 15-03-61 16-01-62 28-07-62 27-07-63 28-07-64							*						

continued.      Certificates Awarded to Schoolmistresses in  
                    Worcestershire Schools - 1849 to 1871.

SOURCE: Worcestershire Boards of Guardians' Minute Books  
1834 to 1871.



H.M.I.'s reports were first included in Poor Law union records, the standard of schoolteaching had certainly improved. Arguably this was because of the influence of H.M.I. inspection. Table 5.2 indicates the levels of certificate awarded to schoolmistresses in Worcestershire workhouse schools between 1850 and 1871. The table was compiled from H.M.I.'s reports, which were available after 1850. It can be seen that there is no clear pattern to the levels of certificate awarded, although there was variation from union to union.

Only at Stourbridge in 1853 and 1854 was a schoolmistress given a "Certificate of Permission", the lowest level of certificate available, however, her replacement appears to have been even worse, she was refused a certificate and was forced to resign. Such refusals of certificate were rare. The only pattern that was apparent was that rural unions, with fewer children in workhouses schools, attracted teachers who obtained marginally higher levels of certificate than did those in urban unions. The schoolmistresses at Martley, a rural union, gained certificates of "Competency", whilst those in urban unions like Kidderminster usually gained a certificate of "Probation". As schoolmistresses usually stayed in office for only a short time it was difficult to identify the effect of inspection on an individual teacher. What was certainly the case was that the standard of teaching by schoolmistresses after 1850

was maintained, arguably because of the influence of H.M.I.'s inspection.

The certificates awarded to workhouse schoolmasters between 1850 and 1871 are presented as Table 5.3. As only larger urban unions appointed schoolmasters, because there were too few children to warrant them in rural places, a comparison between rural and urban unions proved impossible. Only at Evesham in 1853 was the lowest level of "Certificate of Permission" awarded. On three occasions no certificate was awarded, which automatically led to dismissal. Usually schoolmasters were given Certificates of Efficiency or Competency, a higher level of certificate than that conventionally given to women schoolteachers. Again, as with the schoolmistresses, there was no pattern of improvement in the level of certificate awarded, but the influence of H.M.I.'s inspection again appeared to be beneficial in maintaining teaching at an acceptable standard.

The salary scales of workhouse schoolteachers between 1849 and 1856 are presented as Table 5.4. Whilst these were related to the standard of certificate awarded, male teachers generally earned more than did their female counterparts, in spite of women being given on average a higher level of certificate than the men. Women teachers received 80% of the men teachers' salary. In 1856, with the introduction of a capitation system

TABLE 5.3.

Certificates Awarded to Schoolmasters in  
Worcestershire Schools - 1849 to 1871.

UNION.	EFFICIENCY.			COMPETENCY.			PROBATION.			PERMISSION.			NONE.
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
EVESHAM. 20-01-53 12-09-55 12-04-64 6-04-65				*					*	*			
KIDDER- MINSTER. 19-03-61 29-10-61 20-10-63 6-09-64 6-02-66 2-03-69		*			*				*				
STOUR- BRIDGE. 20-11-49 18-10-53 8-03-55 16-01-56 31-12-56 18-12-57 18-02-59 16-01-62 28-07-62 27-07-63 14-10-63 28-12-64 11-01-65 31-01-66 21-03-68 20-02-69 14-10-69 17-08-70 28-07-71		*	*	*	*								

**TABLE 5.3. Continued**

**Certificates Awarded to Schoolmasters in  
Worcestershire Schools - 1849 to 1871.**

UNION.	EFFICIENCY.			COMPETENCY.			PROBATION.			PERMISSION.			NONE.
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
UPTON ON SEVERN.													
28-02-51						*							
10-11-52						*							
28-04-53						*							
8-03-55													*
12-09-55													*
WORCESTER.													
20-06-50						*							
5-05-51						*							
20-01-53				*									
29-04-53													*
8-09-58					*								
14-05-59					*								
23-01-61			*										
31-07-61				*									
18-10-62				*									
18-07-63				*									
27-01-64				*									
26-06-65				*									
11-09-66				*									
15-03-67						*							
9-09-67						*							
9-03-69						*							
31-08-70						*							
27-06-71						*							

SOURCE: Various Boards of Guardians' Minute Books.

for teachers' grants, a flat rate of salary was paid, to which was added an amount for each child in attendance. The system adopted in non-pauper schools after the

"Revised Code" of 1862 was now applied to inspected workhouse schools.

The grants awarded to schoolmistresses in Worcestershire union workhouse schools are presented as Table 5.5, those awarded to schoolmasters as Table 5.6 and the wage awarded to instructors in Table 5.7. There was no apparent pattern in these amounts of salary, except that the introduction of capitation allowances in 1856 did increase schoolteachers' salaries. Instructors' wages were not increased, but capitation did not apply to these individuals. The salary of instructors remained fairly constant between 1850 and 1871. Regarding teachers' remuneration, there were complications caused by comparing individuals with 13 different levels of certificate. Schoolteachers also staying in office for varying lengths of time and various pressures from the Poor Law Board and from local Guardians also caused problems. These factors combined to make a more accurate assessment of salaries and wages difficult.

As suggested earlier, schoolteachers were considered very important, but individuals applying for school posts were often unsuitable. Of the schoolmasters appointed, only those at Worcester,<sup>51</sup> and Stourbridge in 1843<sup>52</sup> had previous teaching experience. Most applicants

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51. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. September 1843, P.R.O. MH12. 14204.

52. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 31st. October 1843, P.R.O. MH12. 14136.

had worked in artisan occupations. Official sources in 1849<sup>53</sup> suggested an average salary of £26 for a schoolmaster, hardly an attractive amount, although salaries in the county varied between £10 and £30 per annum in the 1840's. Talk of low salaries being paid in workhouse schools may thus be misleading, because

TABLE 5.4.

Salary Scale of Union Schoolteachers 1849-56.

SALARY SCALE - £							
	1849		1850		1856		PLUS
CERTIFICATE.	M	F	M	F	M	F	/CHILD.
Efficiency.	1 50	40	60	48	60-30	48-24	12/-
	2 & UPWARDS.		55	44	55-30	44-24	11/-
	3 45	36	50	40	50-30	40-24	10/-
Competency.	1 40	32	45	36	45-25	36-20	7/-
	2 36	28.16s	40	32	40-25	32-20	6/-
	3 33	26.8s	35	28	35-25	28-20	5/-
Probation.	1 30	24	30	24	30-20	20-16	4/-
	2 25	20	25	20	25-16	16-12	3/-
	3 20	16	20	16	20	16	
Permission.	1 15	12	15	12			
	2 10	8	18	8	15	12	
	3 5	4	5	4			

Source: P.L.B. Annual Reports for 1849, 1850 and 1856.

53. Cited by CROWTHER, Op cit. p.127.

TABLE 5.5.

## Grants paid to Schoolmistresses 1849-71.

DATE.	GRANT. £ s	DATE.	GRANT. £ s	DATE.	GRANT. £ s
BROMSGROVE.		KIDDERMINSTER.		16-05-66 30 - 0	
19-03-50	16 - 0	17-07-49	12 - 0	17-07-66	24 - 0
11-06-51	16 - 0	6-03-58	NONE	16-08-67	22 - 8
6-11-53	19 - 3	19-10-58	31 - 13	20-07-68	21 - 12
24-03-55	18 - 11	14-06-59	21 - 4	30-06-69	23 - 12
30-01-56	19 - 18	19-03-61	21 - 8	10-08-70	23 - 12
4-02-57	20 - 12	29-10-61	24 - 4	27-07-71	24 - 0
3-11-57	18 - 14	29-08-62	24 - 0	STOURBRIDGE.	
22-03-59	18 - 17	28-10-63	24 - 0	12-07-50	23 - 16
29-08-65	22 - 8	6-09-64	22 - 8	2-06-52	12 - 0
20-11-66	23 - 0	6-02-66	21 - 4	19-10-53	17 - 16
30-07-67	24 - 0	2-03-69	21 - 4	31-10-53	12 - 0
11-08-68	24 - 0	KING'S NORTON.		6-05-53	12 - 0
2-11-69	24 - 0	25-05-59	30 - 0	18-06-58	33 - 11
13-12-70	23 - 0	10-04-61	23 - 4	15-01-59	16 - 0
DROITWICH.		MARTLEY.		29-01-61	34 - 7
4-10-48	10 - 0	29-07-47	20 - 0	15-03-61	NONE
12-12-49	10 - 0	20-04-58	20 - 0	16-01-62	16 - 0
20-03-50	12 - 0	18-06-58	33 - 11	28-07-62	16 - 0
24-12-51	19 - 15	7-03-60	NONE	27-07-63	16 - 0
8-09-52	24 - 12	29-01-61	34 - 7	28-12-64	20 - 0
20-10-53	16 - 0	11-05-61	20 - 0	11-01-65	24 - 0
17-01-55	16 - 0	29-10-61	28 - 0	31-01-66	32 - 0
26-09-55	22 - 10	18-10-62	20 - 10	14-11-66	32 - 0
31-08-59	20 - 0	27-07-63	21 - 4	21-03-68	32 - 0
3-04-61	16 - 0	6-06-65	19 - 4	26-02-69	36 - 0
6-12-61	16 - 0	4-09-66	19 - 4	4-10-69	20 - 0
23-09-63	16 - 12	10-09-67	19 - 0	17-08-70	20 - 0
21-10-63	16 - 0	30-06-68	20 - 12	28-07-71	20 - 0
14-06-65	18 - 14	25-10-68	20 - 16	WORCESTER.	
20-03-67	24 - 5	23-06-71	22 - 4	17-07-50	28 - 0
10-09-67	19 - 9	PERSHORE.		5-05-51	26 - 16
24-06-68	21 - 4	13-03-49	8 - 0	20-05-53	30 - 0
11-11-68	16 - 0	18-03-51	16 - 0	1-06-53	30 - 0
28-04-69	16 - 0	SHIPSTON ON STOUR.		1-02-54	20 - 10
22-06-70	20 - 0	22-09-51	19 - 16	20-08-54	20 - 1
EVESHAM.		9-09-52	17 - 16	1-07-55	22 - 9
12-09-55	5 - 0	20-01-53	19 - 19	6-10-56	28 - 0
4-04-64	15 - 0	2-06-54	20 - 0	15-04-57	32 - 0
11-04-65	5 - 0	1-05-56	24 - 0	8-09-58	28 - 0
30-11-64	25 - 0	18-05-58	26 - 5	2-05-59	28 - 2
30-08-66	20 - 0	16-06-58	28 - 0	28-01-61	23 - 4
12-04-67	24 - 0	10-05-59	28 - 0	3-07-61	28 - 0
12-05-67	22 - 8	14-07-60	35 - 1	10-10-62	31 - 2
7-01-68	20 - 0	9-11-61	36 - 0	20-02-63	32 - 0
22-06-68	20 - 0	12-5-63	20 - 0	26-01-64	30 - 0
31-01-70	20 - 0	31-03-63	20 - 0	28-01-64	28 - 14
30-08-70	19 - 15	8-08-64	24 - 0	19-01-65	30 - 0
7-02-71	18 - 17	14-07-65	24 - 0	20-03-65	24 - 15
5-04-71	18 - 17				

SOURCE: Various Boards of Guardians' Minutes.

TABLE 5.6.

## Grants Paid to Schoolmasters 1849 to 1871.

DATE.	GRANT. £      s	DATE.	GRANT. £      s
BROMSGROVE.		21-03-68	29 - 0
16-01-55	29 - 10	20-03-69	40 - 0
EVESHAM.		3-08-69	40 - 0
20-01-53	10 - 0	23-10-69	40 - 0
6-11-54	15 - 0	17-08-70	40 - 0
12-09-55	20 - 0	28-07-71	37 - 12
6-04-65	36 - 18	UPTON-ON-SEVERN.	
11-04-59	37 - 19	28-02-50	25 - 0
KIDDERMINSTER.		28-02-51	25 - 0
19-03-61	29 - 4	29-08-51	25 - 0
29-10-61	39 - 8	10-11-52	25 - 0
19-08-62	42 - 0	28-04-53	25 - 0
20-10-63	42 - 13	6-09-55	NONE
6-09-64	39 - 18	1-09-56	NONE
6-02-66	23 - 16	WORCESTER.	
2-03-69	30 - 8	2-06-50	27 - 10
STOURBRIDGE.		5-05-51	26 - 12
21-06-49	36 - 0	21-01-53	32 - 4
25-11-50	33 - 4	1-02-54	33 - 5
10-12-51	23 - 18	6-11-54	33 - 10
20-01-53	32 - 16	19-11-56	35 - 17
18-10-53	33 - 15	3-03-58	36 - 18
8-03-55	30 - 15	8-09-58	32 - 5
16-01-56	49 - 10	14-05-59	33 - 8
3-12-56	45 - 10	28-01-61	33 - 14
18-12-54	42 - 0	31-07-61	34 - 0
3-03-58	36 - 18	18-10-62	34 - 12
18-02-59	32 - 0	18-07-63	36 - 2
14-10-59	15 - 0	26-01-64	36 - 8
15-03-61	44 - 0	28-01-65	35 - 4
16-01-62	49 - 0	21-06-65	34 - 18
28-07-62	48 - 0	1-09-66	37 - 18
27-07-63	48 - 0	20-03-67	27 - 8
21-10-63	28 - 4	9-09-67	28 - 0
28-12-64	24 - 4	9-03-69	27 - 8
11-01-65	32 - 10	7-10-69	27 - 8
31-01-66	49 - 0	31-08-70	26 - 10
14-11-66	52 - 2	27-06-71	27 - 4

SOURCE: Various Guardians' Minute Books.



TABLE 5.7.

## The Wages of Industrial Trainers 1847 to 1871.

DATE.	GRANT. £	s	DATE	GRANT. £	s	DATE	GRANT. £	s
BROMSGROVE.			23-08-59	35	- 0	SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR.		
15-11-47	15	- 0	29-04-62	35	- 0	20-01-47	15	- 0
6-06-65	20	- 0	11-02-69	35	- 0	25-02-47	15	- 0
DROITWICH.			KING'S NORTON.			17-04-47	15	- 0
24-12-50	15	- 0	12-01-53	20	- 0	25-03-48	15	- 0
15-01-51	15	- 0	11-02-57	30	- 0	20-06-48	20	- 0
11-05-53	15	- 0	24-06-57	30	- 0	25-06-48	15	- 0
8-06-53	15	- 0	12-07-58	30	- 0	25-09-48	25	- 0
28-05-56	15	- 0	PERSHORE.			17-08-49	15	- 0
19-01-59	15	- 0	23-09-48	20	- 0	27-01-51	15	- 0
10-08-59	20	- 0	STOURBRIDGE.			24-02-51	15	- 0
25-07-60	15	- 0	14-04-47	30	- 0	22-02-58	15	- 0
21-01-62	18	- 0	3-03-48	30	- 0	18-10-62	15	- 0
3-02-64	18	- 0	12-05-50	20	- 0	UPTON-ON-SEVERN.		
6-04-64	15	- 0	11-11-51	30	- 0	16-05-47	20	- 0
14-11-66	20	- 0	3-07-52	30	- 0	WORCESTER.		
16-09-68	20	- 0	17-09-52	30	- 0	5-08-47	20	- 0
DUDLEY.			12-11-52	15	- 0	13-07-48	20	- 0
2-03-59	30	- 0	12-11-53	15	- 0	30-12-49	30	- 0
EVESHAM.			23-12-53	30	- 0	30-09-52	30	- 0
5-11-54	7	- 0	7-01-54	20	- 0	3-11-52	30	- 0
7-08-60	20	- 0	6-04-54	20	- 0	21-04-53	30	- 0
23-01-61	15	- 0	21-04-54	35	- 0	13-05-53	20	- 0
4-04-64	20	- 0	2-05-55	30	- 0	1-09-53	30	- 0
12-04-67	25	- 0	7-05-55	20	- 0	15-09-53	30	- 0
4-07-67	25	- 0	3-09-57	30	- 0	3-09-57	30	- 0
15-06-70	20	- 0	16-10-57	20	- 0	21-07-58	30	- 0
KIDDERMINSTER.			13-03-58	35	- 0	3-09-59	30	- 0
14-05-47	15	- 0	20-04-58	20	- 0	18-03-63	35	- 0
14-03-48	20	- 0	11-07-59	35	- 0	25-05-65	40	- 0
21-03-48	18	- 0	14-04-60	35	- 0	8-02-67	35	- 0
4-12-49	20	- 0	7-08-63	35	- 0	6-08-68	35	- 0
1-01-50	30	- 0	12-07-67	35	- 0			
2-03-57	12	- 0	27-09-67	35	- 0			
13-03-58	30	- 0	2-04-69	20	- 0			

SOURCE: Worcestershire Boards of Guardians' Minute Books  
1834 to 1871.

amounts varied. The salaries paid to well qualified staff in East Anglian workhouses,<sup>54</sup> still influenced by James Kay-Shuttleworth, were as much as £35 per annum in the 1840's. The average salary in the South Western Division in 1847, including counties not dissimilar from Worcestershire, was said to be<sup>55</sup> £25-15-0 for male teachers. Nationally 17% of schoolmasters earned more than this amount, although 11% earned less than £15 per annum. H.M.I. T.B. Browne<sup>56</sup> believed that the improvement in workhouse teachers noted between 1847 and 1861, was because salaries had been increased. He stated, "....you cannot get a good man in this country to work for a low salary". Only ten pounds was paid to the schoolmaster appointed at Evesham in 1847, but within two months this was raised to £16<sup>57</sup> because it was described as "too low" by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner. More commonly the salary offered was £20 per annum.

Nationally the average salary for a schoolmistress in 1839 was £16 per annum.<sup>58</sup> Only one schoolmistress in the country earned more than £35 per annum in 1847.<sup>59</sup> Ten per cent earned £10 or less at this time although £15

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54. DIGBY, Op cit. p.187.

55. OBERMANN, Op cit. p.135.

56. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children 1861-2. Brown's Evidence. Q.12439. P.P. (519) XLIX. I.U.P. "Education: Poorer Classes", Vol.7.

57. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 27th. July 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 13999.

58. CROWTHER, Op cit. p.127.

59. OBERMANN, Op cit. p.135.

was the amount normally paid to schoolmistresses in Worcestershire. H.M.I. J.C. Symons justified low salaries as "preferable to fluctuating ones",<sup>60</sup> a distinction probably not acceptable to workhouse teachers. At Pershore in 1838<sup>61</sup> the workhouse master's daughters helped their mother, the unpaid Matron, run the school. The master was paid a salary for arranging for all of the officer's posts to be fulfilled. He did this either by himself acting as master, porter, and at first as chaplain, or by using members of his family who were unpaid, a situation that was probably unique.

The preface to the 1851 Educational Census<sup>62</sup> referred to the efficiency of schools depending "on the teacher, much more than on any other circumstance". H.M.I. T.B. Browne agreed with this, by stating; "There are persons who can teach admirably, and exercise an extraordinary influence over depraved children".<sup>63</sup> He claimed that there were many such teachers in his jurisdiction. Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, showed that other inspectors agreed with T.B. Browne. Graham stated; "The evidence through the reports of Inspectors of workhouses is this: that in every school the child principally

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60. P.C.C.E. Minutes 1857-8, P.P. (2386) XLV, p.60.

61. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. February 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14105. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 2.

62. 1851 CENSUS, p. xxxiii.

63. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children 1861-2, Op cit. Q.12348.

depends upon the [school] master, and in a workhouse school it depends on the [school] master more, because the children see scarcely anyone else",<sup>64</sup> although he thought that capitation allowances introduced in 1861 were detrimental because they were liable to drive talented teachers out of the schools. These allowances related salary to the teacher's certificate, but also to the number of pupils present. In workhouse schools numbers fluctuated wildly and the capitation system was therefore regarded as an unfair because it was an inequitable way of distributing salary according to merit. Before 1856 attaining a standard of Certificate resulted in a particular amount of grant irrespective of the number of children present, but later the number of children present at inspection was taken into account. Whilst the salary offered to the schoolteacher was usually the amount of the government grant, Guardians often specified a salary, and then paid the difference when the grant was less than that salary. If a higher grant was paid the teacher received that amount. Inflated salaries were sometimes used as a method to gain better qualified school staff, although this usually failed, whilst the Poor Law Board objected to this ploy. At Droitwich in 1856<sup>65</sup> the Board enquired why

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64. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children 1861-2. Ibid. Q.6518.

65. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 20th. February 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 7.

the salary offered for a new schoolmistress was £5 more than her predecessor, to which the Guardians replied they hoped to attract a better standard of applicant. However, the schoolmistress appointed "pro tempore", who was not well qualified, was eventually appointed permanently. She was given the same salary as her predecessor.<sup>66</sup> Ironically this same union had attempted to reduce all officers' salaries by 20% in 1850,<sup>67</sup> but the Poor Law Board would not allow this.<sup>68</sup> Sometimes teachers asked for their salaries to be raised, with Guardians usually responding by altering conditions of service instead. The Guardians at King's Norton in 1858,<sup>69</sup> appointed an assistant teacher at £1 per week, to help the overworked schoolmistress who had responsibility for 46 children, but the assistant's post was abolished when numbers fell. At Kidderminster in 1869<sup>70</sup> the Guardians told the schoolmistress that they would not agree to raising her salary, instead they removed the boys from her care making them the responsibility of the workhouse master.<sup>71</sup>

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66. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 21st. May 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 7.

67. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 27th. February 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 5.

68. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 27th. March 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 5.

69. KING'S NORTON GUARDIANS, Minutes. 20th. January 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14043. B.P.L. Fl.

70. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. November 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 14024. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 20.

71. Ibid.

The salary levels in workhouse schools were important as they determined whether a teacher would enter the workhouse system with all of the privations implied. In elementary schools in the period from 1840 the inspectorate distributed the grant, creating two categories of schools; those inspected and those not inspected. An inspected teacher was perceived as superior to his uninspected contemporary, but because all workhouse teachers were inspected the workhouses had some slight attraction over uninspected elementary schools. However, workhouse teachers' certificates were not transferable to non-workhouse schools before 1861. A salary of £70 was the best salary paid to a schoolmaster in an inspected elementary school in 1847.<sup>72</sup> Therefore at first sight the salaries offered in Worcestershire workhouse schools appeared low, but when allowances for the value of lodgings, put at £13 -8 -8d by Assistant Commissioner A. Austin,<sup>73</sup> and for victuals were added, the workhouse salary was broadly comparable. Critical remarks about the standard of applicants for the post of schoolmaster in all types of elementary school were made, implying that "the majority were men who had tried other trades and failed. They had been semi-skilled craftsmen, shopkeepers, clerks, and superior domestic servants".<sup>74</sup>

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72. OBERMANN, Op cit. p.138. Citing P.P. 1847-8. (998) p.28.

73. A.P.L.C. A. Austin's Report, 3rd. February 1848. P.R.O. MH32/74.

74. TROPP. Asher, The Schoolteachers, London, 1957. p.10.

Such a situation was regarded as inevitable given the salary offered and the lack of social prestige attached to the office. A majority of women entrants to elementary teacher training, as instanced by students at Hockerhill College in the period 1852-5,<sup>75</sup> certainly came from such artisan origins. The salaries offered to teachers were apparently attractive to them. Unqualified applicants for posts as workhouse schoolteacher appeared no different from unqualified applicants for elementary schoolteaching posts elsewhere. By 1862, H.M.I. T.G. Bowyer felt able to describe workhouse teachers as "a very respectable, hard working and conscientious class of persons, who make up by diligence and dedication to their duties, for deficiencies under which many of them labour in regard to ability and instruction".<sup>76</sup> To tolerate the privations and conditions of the workhouse was indeed an indication of dedication, but generally Worcestershire's workhouse teachers did not stay for long, which was a continuing cause for concern. The requirements laid down by Kidderminster Guardians in 1847,<sup>77</sup> that the applicant for a teaching post must be acquainted with the "National System of Education",

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75. HEAFFORD, Michael, "Women Entrants to a Teacher Training College 1852-1860", History of Education Society Bulletin. No.23. Spring 1979, pp.14-21.

76. BOWYER'S evidence to SC 1861-2, Op cit. Q.3007. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 5.

77. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. April 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 6.

meant that only trained teachers, or teachers experienced in a National School were able to apply. This helped explain the situation cited at Kidderminster,<sup>78</sup> where there were fourteen vacancies for schoolmistresses in the period 1835 to 1847, more than in any other union in the country. When a trained or experienced applicant did apply for a teaching post in workhouses they tended to be appointed, as happened at Droitwich Union in 1850, where advertisements were placed in; The Times, The Midland Counties Herald and rather surprisingly in The Gardener's Chronicle.<sup>79</sup> These advertisements specified a schoolmistress over twenty five years old was sought. King's Norton Guardians went further stating, that they preferred a widow over twenty five years old, but they were willing to accept a woman with dependent children.<sup>80</sup> Suitably qualified applicants were appointed in both cases. Unusually, as at Droitwich in 1850<sup>81</sup> the Guardians attempted to impose conditions on the appointment of a schoolmistress by insisting that she passed her inspection by H.M.I. before they would appoint her permanently. However, the Poor Law Board

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78. OBERMANN, Op cit. p.161.

79. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 25th. September 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 5.

80. KING'S NORTON GUARDIANS, Minutes. 12th. January 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14042. B.P.L. Fl.

81. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 30th. October 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 5.



decided that the Guardians could not make such stipulations. This caused the schoolmistress to resign immediately, stating her reason as; "In consequence of your not appointing a schoolmaster",<sup>82</sup> which had been promised at interview.<sup>83</sup> She was given a good testimonial and her rail fare to London. It was unrealistic to expect a teacher to be trained and/or experienced. As late as 1865 the Guardians at Bromsgrove<sup>84</sup> were complaining that no experienced or trained applicants offered themselves for appointment, with very young applicants applying for teaching posts, as at Droitwich in 1866<sup>85</sup> where one applicant for a post was only sixteen years old.

To state that all workhouse teachers were of very poor quality would be unfair, because there were efficient teachers in some county workhouse schools, yet there continued to be problems in some areas, particularly in rural schools, where the numbers of pupils was small. Such schools tended to be isolated thus heightening the feeling of closedness in the workhouse. In the period 1834 to 1844 Assistant Commissioner Ruddock said of the living conditions of schoolmistresses, that "they are

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82. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 6th. November 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 5.

83. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 18th. December 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 5.

84. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 9th. May 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

85. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 3rd. October 1866. P.R.O. MH12. 13939. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 11.

generally pent up in a small closet boarded off from the common sleeping apartment of the children".<sup>86</sup> However, this situation was said to have improved by 1861. Inevitably Worcestershire, a largely rural county, had a number of isolated rural workhouse schools of which H.M.I. T.B. Browne said; "It is impossible to evaluate because in general terms....the difference between them is as great as the difference between black and white".<sup>87</sup> Assistant Commissioner R. Weale, referring to workhouse teachers in general, stated in 1861; "I think that we have very competent teachers indeed. I am sorry to say that we very often lose such teachers, the competition being so great".<sup>88</sup> Teachers sometimes moved to elementary day schools or left teaching, whilst some stayed in the workhouse school system. Others applied for other Poor Law posts. The Schoolmaster at Kidderminster Union in 1856<sup>89</sup> unsuccessfully applied to become master at Wolverhampton Workhouse. Later he suffered a paralytic seizure,<sup>90</sup> which ironically led him to become an inmate of the Strand Workhouse, London.<sup>91</sup> Kidderminster Guardians adhered strictly to the relief

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86. PCCE Minutes, 1847 August 9, Cited in S.C.on the Education of Pauper Children 1861-2, Op cit. p.72.

87. SC 1861-2, Op cit. Q.12448.

88. SC 1861-2, Op cit. Q.4773.

89. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 29th. April 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 14021. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 10.

90. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. July 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14022. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 13.

91. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. November 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14022. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 13.

rules, however, refusing to accept any responsibility for him. The schoolmaster at Evesham in 1860 was appointed schoolmaster at Worcester gaol at an increased salary,<sup>92</sup> whilst the schoolmaster at Worcester, in 1863, became Returning Officer at Edgeware,<sup>93</sup> a definite promotion. Stourbridge's schoolmaster was appointed Master of Ledbury Workhouse in 1867.<sup>94</sup> He had been an effective teacher gaining the highest certificate in the county - Efficiency II in 1865<sup>95</sup> and again in 1866.<sup>96</sup> Some schoolmasters applied for other schoolteaching posts. Another man from Kidderminster, in 1864, was appointed as schoolmaster at Wolverhampton Workhouse,<sup>97</sup> to a very much larger school, whilst the schoolmaster at Evesham in 1866 was appointed to the smaller workhouse at Willerton.<sup>98</sup> At Kidderminster another schoolmaster was appointed to Quatt Industrial School in 1867,<sup>99</sup> a school regarded by the Poor Law Board as outstanding and this was a clear promotion. Schoolteachers sometimes moved out of Poor

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92. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. July 1860. P.R.O. MH12. 14001.

93. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. March 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14210.

94. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 28th. June 1867. P.R.O. MH12. 14144.

95. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 3rd. October 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14143.

96. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 3rd. January 1866. P.R.O. MH12. 14143.

97. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. December 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 17.

98. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 17th. July 1866. P.R.O. MH12. 14001.

99. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. May 1867. P.R.O. MH12. 14024. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 19.

Law Schools, as at Stourbridge in 1852<sup>100</sup> where the schoolmaster used the experience gained in workhouse schools to start his own private school, but there was no indication of whether this was a success. The teacher at Worcester in 1857 became schoolmaster at Plaistow National School, Essex,<sup>101</sup> whilst the one at Evesham in 1861<sup>102</sup> gained a position at an elementary school in Birmingham. However, these were only a minority of male teachers and it was probably true that the post of workhouse schoolmaster was the highest social status level attained by most male incumbents of workhouse school posts in the county between 1834 and 1871.

Schoolmistresses were sometimes promoted either to be matron of a workhouse or to a larger workhouse as schoolmistresses. Many other workhouse schoolmistresses left teaching, some married, whilst others sought other occupations. The schoolmistress at Shipston-on-Stour, in 1849,<sup>103</sup> gained a post as schoolmistress at Headington Workhouse which was "more to her liking", but perhaps more significant at an increased salary. The physical conditions in workhouses sometimes influenced the school staff. At Stourbridge in 1853, the schoolmistress, "gained another position at more salary and less

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100. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 26th. May 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14139.

101. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. March 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 14208.

102. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 5th. November 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 14001.

103. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 23rd. July 1849. P.R.O. MH12. 14118.

confinement",<sup>104</sup> however, usually it was increased salaries that were the attraction. In the same union in 1869,<sup>105</sup> the schoolmistress was appointed to the large workhouse at Preston, Lancashire. The schoolteacher at Martley in 1861<sup>106</sup> became matron at that union having been schoolmistress in the interim until the matron's position fell vacant. Her husband had already been master there for three years. Sometimes the confinement of the workhouse meant that a schoolmistress left her post without obtaining another, as at Evesham in 1870, when the schoolmistress left "because a change was desirable".<sup>107</sup>

There appeared to be a problem at this union workhouse, however, as her replacement left within seven months saying she was "tired of her situation".<sup>108</sup> Like workhouse schoolmasters, schoolmistresses did not generally move into higher social status groups, but their propensity to marry meant that the pattern was not as apparent as amongst their male contemporaries. There was also a tendency for workhouse schoolmistresses to come from marginally higher social status groups than their male contemporaries. Workhouse teachers had to live

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104. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 27th. April 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14140.

105. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 22nd. March 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 14144.

106. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. May 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 14087.

107. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 13th. May 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 14003.

108. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 11th. January 1871. P.R.O. MH12. 14003.

within the closed workhouse community, which they feared, believing that once appointed they would be deemed unsuitable for a post in a school outside the Poor Law system. As very few county workhouse schoolteachers were appointed to elementary schools this belief may have been justified. The workhouse schoolteacher's duties have been aptly referred to as being "really those of full time attendants, in most unions they supervise the children constantly".<sup>109</sup> It is tempting to wonder why anyone took workhouse schoolteaching posts under these circumstances in preference to more conducive work. This may provide an explanation of why applicants for such posts were usually of poor quality. In spite of Poor Law Commission suggestions in the 1830's and 40's that experienced teachers were necessary in workhouse schools, the staff of county workhouse schools tended to be young and inexperienced. They inevitably had problems disciplining the children. Workhouses were essentially coercive and unattractive so that the salaries offered proved insufficient to attract qualified applicants. In rural Worcestershire there was no pool of experienced teachers to draw on and most applicants were local.

#### **v. Teacher Selection and Training.**

The belief that the character of the school staff was important was emphasised by the Central Authority<sup>110</sup>

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109. CROWTHER, Op cit. p.130.

110. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children 1861-2, Op cit. BROWNE'S evidence. Q.12501.

in the hope that the beneficial influence of teachers would counterbalance the insidious effects of the workhouse. Teachers were carefully selected, preferably being trained and capable of fulfilling the "exacting task of teaching such pupils".<sup>111</sup> Trained teachers were not generally appointed locally, although even nationally no qualification was required to become a workhouse school teacher, even after 1847 when the Poor Law Board came to office. It was stated that "schoolmasters have often been dependent on parochial relief, and are generally ignorant and unskilled".<sup>112</sup> Of the schoolmistress at Stourbridge in 1847 it was said by H.M.I., that "it is likely that she will do well, but I have some doubts as to her temper",<sup>113</sup> whilst the Assistant Commissioner commented; "There is a young schoolmistress who is very young, but in acquirements she seems not deficient. I think she will do though her character is scarcely formed".<sup>114</sup> She was satisfactory when inspected in 1848, but in mitigation it was stated the children were "very young and frequently change",<sup>115</sup> causing some problems. The character of teachers was all important, testimonials being given as a reference to character rather than

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111. Ibid. DOYLE'S evidence. Q.4277.

112. Ibid. LAMBERT'S evidence Q.5063.

113. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. June 1847, P.R.O. MH12. 14137.

114. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. May 1847, P.R.O. MH12. 14137.

115. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. February 1848, P.R.O. MH12. 14138.

teaching efficiency. The schoolmaster at Worcester in 1857 was said to be "of high character",<sup>116</sup> trained at Worcester Diocesan Training College at Saltley for 6 months, taught at Spilsby, Lincolnshire for one year and had good testimonials to the great satisfaction of the Guardians. Within three months, however, he was forced to resign after being found guilty at Gloucester Assizes of fraudulently falsifying his Baptismal Certificate - he had not been baptised an Anglican.<sup>117</sup> The schoolmistress at Martley a year later<sup>118</sup> came with similar good recommendations, but there were no problems here. Although the regulations demanded competent teachers, there were doubts in the 1830's and 40's whether those employed were competent, whilst Guardians' parsimony accentuated this problem. The Poor Law Commission was aware that all was not well with workhouse education, thus a circular in 1838,<sup>119</sup> included a questionnaire to probe the nature of education offered in workhouse schools, the sort of individuals employed as teachers, their background, whether they themselves had been pauperised, and their qualifications to teach. Such problems persisted because in 1848 the Poor Law Board<sup>120</sup> insisted that there was a need to examine the

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116. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. May 1857, P.R.O. MH12. 14208.

117. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. May 1857, P.R.O. MH12. 14208.

118. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 16th. August 1858, P.R.O. MH12. 14090.

119. P.L.C. Circular, 22nd. June 1838. P.L.C. 5th. Annual Report. 1839. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1249/1295.

120. P.C.C.E. Minutes 1847 August 9. p.iv.



qualifications of school staff following an adverse Annual Report in 1847. It was stated; "The proper education and training of children in the workhouse is essential to the improvement of their condition, as well as being highly important with reference to the social condition of the working class generally, and the increased efficiency of workhouse schools must always be an object of much solicitude with the Board". It went on to ask whether teachers were trained to "fulfil the exacting task of teaching such pupils". The staff of the workhouse schools in Worcestershire in 1848 were usually young and untrained, coming afresh to teaching. The situation was worsened by opportunities for teacher training being extremely limited.<sup>121</sup> Even in 1859 there were only thirty four training colleges, whilst of 2,192 graduates from Battersea Training School in the twenty three years from 1840<sup>122</sup> only 35 went to teach in Poor Law establishments.

Kneller Hall Training College which ~~was~~ intended to train workhouse school teachers had only trained 33 teachers who took posts in workhouses. There was an inevitable dearth of such entrants to the workhouse schools because these institutions were so unattractive. However, Assistant Commissioner W.H.T. Hawley said of his South

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121. HORN, P. Education in Rural England Methuen, 1976. p.87.

122. OBERMANN, Op cit. p.152.

Western Region in 1862,<sup>123</sup> "....most of them....have been to training schools and they have certificates". He insisted;<sup>124</sup> "They were from all quarters, many of them from the Kneller Hall Institute", although another Assistant Commissioner, A. Doyle, questioned the worth of Kneller Hall, which existed between 1850 and 1855, referring to it as "a complete failure....[and]....an enormous waste of public money".<sup>125</sup> Conventionally Kneller Hall was said to train teachers for District Schools, thus when such schools were not created, "its scholars....[thought themselves]....too good to accept or retain the ill paid and irksome office of workhouse schoolmasters". A. Doyle disputed this purpose, however, stating that "Kneller Hall was instituted for the special purpose of training masters for [all] workhouse schools".<sup>126</sup> By reading the evidence one gains an impression that this emphasis was the intended one, but it was impossible to ensure that teachers trained at Kneller Hall obtained posts in the Poor Law schooling system. Even when teacher training developed, with training colleges being more plentiful, few College trained teachers were employed in Worcestershire workhouses. There were no attempts to improve matters either, for which H.M.I. T.B. Browne placed the blame on

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123. WHT HAWLEY, S.C. on Poor Relief, 1862, P.P. (321) IUP Poor Law Vol. 26. Q.5660.

124. Ibid. Q.5559.

125. A. DOYLE, S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1862, P.P. (510) XLIX, IUP Education: Poorer Classes, Vol. 7. p.81.

126. A. DOYLE, S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1862, Ibid.

the Guardians. He suggested in 1861 that teachers of good moral influence could be secured; "By vesting the powers to appoint teachers in fewer hands".<sup>127</sup> Therefore Guardians should select "any man or woman possessed of a fair degree of intelligence and Christian principle whose heart is in his work".<sup>128</sup> He clearly believed in the concept of a "born teacher" by stating; "I believe that they (teaching skills) can be acquired to a certain extent. I think that the art of teaching is a gift, although it may be developed".<sup>129</sup> In the absence of sufficient training colleges to train workhouse teachers he argued for recruiting pupil teachers from amongst talented inmate children, although this was never done anywhere in Worcestershire. The only place where this was done was apparently in District Schools. There continued to be a dearth of trained workhouse teachers everywhere, probably because in a free market workhouse schools were not attractive. This situation improved, however, so that by 1871 applicants for schoolteaching posts in county workhouses were more likely to be trained and/or experienced.

#### **vi. Teacher Quality.**

There was never a shortage of applicants for the post of schoolmistress, with replacement usually being within

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127. T.B. BROWNE, T.B. S.C. on Poor Relief 1861, P.P. (474-I), IUP Poor Law Vol. 25. p.671, Q. 12374.

128. Ibid. Q. 12375.

129. Ibid. pp.671-2, Q. 12376.

one month of a resignation. Sometimes, however, an inmate was appointed in the interim, a practice officially disapproved of as adult paupers would "taint" the children. The practice ceased in most places by 1840, but unusually at Tenbury Wells in 1842<sup>130</sup> an inmate was permanently appointed as schoolmistress. She was also to "help the matron". This experiment failed, with the woman dismissed as "unsuitable" within a month.<sup>131</sup> One must question assumptions that; "In many workhouse schools at this time [the 1840's] the pupils were, in any case, in little danger of learning anything, for often the Guardians economised by using other inmates as teachers",<sup>132</sup> a belief no doubt based on opinions given to the Privy Council Committee on Education in 1847, that "an inspection of forty one schools in the Northern Counties found that teachers in twenty five schools were themselves paupers", but the northern counties were not typical. Unusually at Kidderminster in 1844,<sup>133</sup> an acquaintance was temporarily appointed "by the master", for six weeks until the person appointed took up their post. Normally, however, Guardians were scrupulous in their care over school appointments. Few Guardians

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130. TENBURY WELLS BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 12th. July 1842. P.R.O. MH12. 14169. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 413. Par. 3.

131. TENBURY WELLS BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 9th. August 1842. P.R.O. MH12. 14169. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 413. Par. 3.

132. LONGMATE, N. The Workhouse, Temple Smith, 1974. p. 168.

133. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 29th. October 44, P.R.O. MH12. 14018. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 5.

remained vehement about "Less Eligibility" as a determinant of what education was offered, thus bowing to the pressures exerted by the Poor Law Commission. Evesham Guardians were reported in 1846<sup>134</sup> because they made no provision for the education of children in the workhouse, which had over 30 child inmates at the time. It was stated that "the children are placed under the care of a man and a woman, who are paupers and themselves ignorant of what the children at least might learn". Whilst the education offered may have conformed to the Guardians' perception of "Less Eligibility" it did not satisfy the central administration. Two years later it was reported that, the inmate children at Evesham "ought to be taught to read and write and to know the 4 rules of arithmetic".<sup>135</sup> In spite of the problem being dealt with it was still concluded; "No children can, in my opinion be more neglected as regards education, than the children of Evesham workhouse, and it is apparent that the [school] master has much more on his hands than he can properly attend to". The need for the teacher to be a good model was re-emphasised, with Evesham Guardians acting immediately to appoint a schoolmaster-porter.<sup>136</sup> The Assistant Poor Law Commissioner<sup>137</sup> expressed satisfaction with the new "schoolmaster", but he ignored the man's portering duties.

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134. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 6th. June 1846. (Letter to Guardians from P.L.C.) P.R.O. MH12. 13999.

135. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 6th. July 1846. P.R.O. MH12. 13999.

136. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 26th. July 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 13999.

137. Ibid.

At Upton-on-Severn in 1847, a land surveyor with seventeen years teaching experience was appointed, and his appointment was immediately approved. H.M.I. described him, in 1848, as "a man of inferior acquirements, but he takes great pains".<sup>138</sup> The school improved under his care, so that in 1850<sup>139</sup> he was given a Certificate of Probation Grade III with a government grant of £25. However, in early 1851 the Assistant Commissioner expressed concern about this schoolmaster, although H.M.I. confirmed his certificate with a grant of £25. Two years later the schoolmaster was seen by H.M.I. who confirmed his certificate to Probation II with the same grant. In 1855, however, another H.M.I. refused to award a certificate and no grant was paid. Therefore either the schoolmaster had deteriorated in health and efficiency as a teacher in the interim or the criteria used by various H.M.I. to judge teachers differed. This was not the only case in the county where a teacher was seen by different H.M.I. on subsequent inspections. There was usually a concurrence of opinion about the teacher between H.M.I.'s, but here there was disagreement. It may have been therefore that this schoolmaster had deteriorated in standard. H.M.I. later stated: "It is

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138. UPTON-ON-SEVERN GUARDIANS, Minutes. 20th. July 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14183. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 5.

139. UPTON-ON-SEVERN GUARDIANS, Minutes. 28th. February 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 14184. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 5.

obviously useless to examine the schoolmaster, whose school is in a most unsatisfactory state, who is both by age, (he was fifty five years old) and infirmity totally incapacitated for the discharge of his duties. He was unable to preserve discipline or draft classes in my presence". H.M.I. returned to the school,<sup>140</sup> stating "this poor man is wholly unfit for his post, and I may say that he is retained because he is infirm and deaf and would be a pauper if not maintained in his present situation, to the sacrifice of the children". No certificate or grant was given, but the Guardians continued to employ him. By 1855, however,<sup>141</sup> they were contemplating sending the children to the local National School, but the Assistant Commissioner indicated that the children would still need superintending at the workhouse and that someone must be employed to do this. H.M.I. for the elementary school in Upton-on-Severn also informed the Guardians that the National School was "inferior". However, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner appended a marginal comment to the Central Authority's copy of this minute, favouring attendance at the National School, because it would "break the monotony of the workhouse....[and]....it would rid them [the children] of the badge of the degraded caste".<sup>142</sup> H.M.I. read these views as did officials of the Privy Council

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140. UPTON-ON-SEVERN GUARDIANS, Minutes. 29th. September 1855. P.R.O. MH12. 14185. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 6.

141. Ibid.

142. Ibid. (Appended by A.P.L.C.)

Committee on Education, but they took no action to prevent the arrangement being adopted. It was only one eighth of a mile from the workhouse to the elementary school with some supervision necessary on this walk. An industrial training instructor was suggested, who could also supervise the children in going to and coming from the school. He could also give them industrial training. When the retired, old and infirm schoolmaster resigned his post in 1855,<sup>143</sup> he was soon appointed as industrial trainer. This was an arrangement approved by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner who commented that he (Whiteside) was "able to cope",<sup>144</sup> but he wondered what trade he would teach - the appointment was confirmed. The care taken over the appointment of industrial trainers was thus questioned. The Assistant Commissioner's opinions were known to the Central Authority, yet they still proceeded with an unsuitable appointment. Boys of over eight years of age were sent to the National School. Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Sir J. Walsham commented on this type of arrangement when he stated; "I am quite satisfied that the extension of similar arrangements, except when unavoidable would produced educational results much inferior to those

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143. UPTON-ON-SEVERN GUARDIANS, Minutes. 14th. December 1855. P.R.O. MH12. 14185. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 6.

144. UPTON-ON-SEVERN GUARDIANS, Minutes. 15th. January 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 14186. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 7.



attained in the workhouse schools".<sup>145</sup> Boys under eight years old, he suggested, could be placed with the girls and a schoolmistress appointed to teach them, thus avoiding the need to send inmate children out of the workhouse.

Few schoolmistresses appointed were trained teachers, a minority had been Sunday School teachers, whilst some had taught as pupil teachers in Day Schools. However, there were exceptions. The schoolmistress at Worcester in 1841, had been "employed as a schoolmistress at St. George's National School, Kidderminster",<sup>146</sup> whilst at Stourbridge in 1846, the woman appointed was described as a trained teacher who had been employed as a "Governess at Napton National School".<sup>147</sup> The schoolmistress at Martley Workhouse School in 1844, had been "an apprentice schoolmistress Kensington National School",<sup>148</sup> whilst at Worcester in 1845<sup>149</sup> the schoolmistress appointed had taught for three years at Tenbury Wells National School. At Shipston-on-Stour in 1846<sup>150</sup> the woman appointed was previously employed as a

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145. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op cit. Sir J. Walsham's Evidence. p.43. I.U.P. p.343.

146. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. May 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 14203.

147. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 23rd. January 1846. P.R.O. MH12. 14137.

148. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 16th. March 1844. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

149. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 17th. January 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14204.

150. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 18th. April 1846. P.R.O. MH12. 14117.

teacher". These few cases were only a minority of schoolmistresses employed in Worcestershire workhouse schools, where most schoolmistresses were untrained.

In several cases joint appointments were made, with the husband employed as the schoolmaster or porter and the wife as schoolmistress. In four such cases the husband was dismissed for indiscipline or cruelty, but no schoolmistress wife was guilty of misdemeanour. In three cases resignation was because of the injurious effect of the workhouse atmosphere on the health of the wife, with the tile floor of the schoolroom having a deleterious effect on her health, a major concern that led to the floor being boarded at Droitwich in 1866,<sup>151</sup> when the Guardians wanted to retain the schoolmistress and her husband (the porter) in office. Boarding over tiled floors for health reasons was common in the 1860's.

One hundred and two schoolmistresses were appointed in the county between 1834 and 1871, but one resigned without taking up her post because she felt it would be "too much for her". All schoolmistresses appointed were "Protestant", most being Anglican. Regarding the ages of schoolmistresses, most were between twenty and forty years old, with only four under twenty and four over forty years old. The oldest appointment was fifty one

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151. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 27th. May 1866. H.M.I.'s Report. P.R.O. MH12. 13939. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 11.

years old. Older schoolmistresses, over twenty-five years old, were favoured because young women were considered unreliable as they had difficulty in disciplining children. This led Kidderminster Guardians in 1839 to successfully advertise for; "A respectable middle aged lady to act as schoolmistress for the union workhouse".<sup>152</sup> A very young schoolmistress was appointed at Bromsgrove in 1839,<sup>153</sup> who was only sixteen years old. The Poor Law Commission sanctioned her appointment immediately, which suggested that her references were exceptional.

Inevitably the medical officer, who probably suspected that the schoolmistress would not cope, reported that "in an instance or two she has exercised too much severity towards the children".<sup>154</sup> However, on inquiry it was found that there was no evidence substantiating this claim. The schoolmistress was merely "demonstrating her authority". The Medical Officer was admonished for listening to "hear-say". The teacher remained in office for seven and a half years,<sup>155</sup> the longest term served

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152. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. July 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

153. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 11th. March 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 13904. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 1(ii).

154. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 3rd. June 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 13904. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 1(ii).

155. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 1st. November 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 13908. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 4.

by any schoolmistress in the period 1834 to 1871. She eventually resigned to marry. Generally schoolmistresses served for much less than two years, very quickly finding the task too much for them. Some were "advised" to resign after only a month's trial. Clearly this suggested that young schoolmistresses had difficulty in dealing with classroom indiscipline in that they were forced to resort to severe punishment. However, this only happened in a minority of cases.

#### vii. Discipline.

Discipline inevitably figured highly as a priority for schoolteachers, with ability in this respect being considered essential. Whilst some teachers were competent to instruct children they lacked control. At Worcester in 1847,<sup>156</sup> the schoolmaster and schoolmistress were criticised, not because they were unable to teach but because they were unable to control the children. In 1848, it was reported "The schoolmaster is competent to teach but defective in systems of power and command - the boys have been rebellious, but they are at present orderly".<sup>157</sup> The word "subordination" was used in Workhouse Orders unequivocally implying the social control expected by the Poor Law Authority, but the workhouse officers wanted control for another

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156. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 30th. September 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14205.

157. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. June 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14205.

reason. They desired to maintain their pauper charges in a compliant mood because this produced paupers who were manageable, and hence less threatening. Inevitably some workhouse children were indisciplined, but this seldom proved a problem. Almost as a by-product of workhouse education, inmate children gained a veneer of respectability acceptable to the middle class. Such children showed respect for their social superiors thus making them very acceptable as servants, an aspect of that is discussed more fully in the next chapter. It has, however, been maintained that, "....it is difficult to discover any system of formal education which does not inculcate respect for the values of the social leaders".<sup>158</sup> Perhaps therefore workhouse education was no different from other institutionalised education.

King's Norton Union, contiguous with Birmingham, had grown at a prodigious rate in the period 1834 to 1871.<sup>159</sup> As early as 1838<sup>160</sup> the Guardians there had

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158. CROWTHER, Op cit. p.202.

159. The Population Growth of King's Norton.

DATE.	NUMBER.
1801.	2,807.
1811.	3,068.
1821.	3,651.
1831.	3,977.
1841.	5,550.
1851.	7,759.
1861.	13,634.
1871.	21,845.

Source. 1851 Census Report. (1852) P.P. (1631) LXXXV.

p.78. I.U.P. Population, Vol.7. p.894.

1871 Census Report. (1873) P.P. (676-I) LXVI.

p.315. I.U.P. Population. Vol.17. p.337.

160. KING'S NORTON GUARDIANS, Minutes. 8th. June 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14039. B.P.L. Fl.

discussed the nature of punishments and rewards used by schoolteachers. They adopted "reward books" being given as prizes for good behaviour, but the schoolmistress was also allowed to punish the children by "setting them stand on a stool in one corner of the room and having a dunces cap on their heads". This was to be for no more than thirty minutes for those over six years old, and for no more than fifteen minutes for those under six years old. Under Poor Law Board regulations corporal punishment could not be used on girls,<sup>161</sup> but at Pershore in 1848<sup>162</sup> the schoolmistress was called before the Guardians to be warned not to use corporal punishment on girls who misbehaved. Such punishments were not always given by the schoolmistress, so that at Droitwich in 1848 when the schoolmistress was investigated regarding her ability to maintain "subordination in the school",<sup>163</sup> she stated that she had no difficulty in this respect, as if she encountered problems with boys the porter chastised them. Elsewhere boys were chastised by the workhouse master or the schoolmaster. Some schoolmistresses (and schoolmasters) could not control the children even using the range of legal punishments available. At King's Norton in 1858 the schoolmistress was "....directed....in the case of her inflicting

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161. KING'S NORTON GUARDIANS, Minutes. 24th. June 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14041. B.P.L. Fl.

162. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. June 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 4.

163. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 29th. March 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 13933. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 3.

corporal punishment to use a birch and not a cane or stick, and suggested the priority in cases of corporal punishment being required to hand the offender over to the master".<sup>164</sup> The medical officer requested that this schoolmistress should, "refrain from unusual modes of punishment and to provide a birch rod to use in case of corporal punishment being resorted to".<sup>165</sup> She presumably complied as there was no further comment. At Bromsgrove in 1863 the schoolmistress had two boys beaten for disobedience and general bad behaviour with; "The whole of the children....[being]....brought into the room reasoned with and cautioned and the master was instructed that if the boys did not behave well, to birch them with a rod which was produced".<sup>166</sup> As a last resort in some workhouses girls above twelve who badly behaved were to be confined in the refractory ward. A twelve year old girl, who was disobedient at Droitwich in 1856,<sup>167</sup> "was....confined in the refractory ward for 24 hours with a change of diet - Remit to 12 hours if she apologised". If all else failed, however, a child was removed and placed with the able bodied adult paupers, thus breaching the inviolable classification of the workhouse. Such action was not liked by the Guardians,

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164. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. February 1858, MH12, 14043. B.P.L. Fl.

165. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. April 1858, MH12, 14043. B.P.L. Fl.

166. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 27th. October 1863, MH12, 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

167. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. February 1856, MH12, 13911. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

but at King's Norton in 1861<sup>168</sup> this was done in a serious case "in consequence of the bad example set to the rest of the school".

Illegal punishments were undoubtedly used, with girls and boys being illicitly severely beaten, although such cases often went unrecorded. At Kidderminster in 1848<sup>169</sup> the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner reported, a complaint about the schoolmaster who had improperly punished a boy under his charge. He found the schoolmaster unacquainted with the provisions of Article 140 of the General Order of 24th. June 1847 respecting the punishment of children in the workhouse"<sup>170</sup>. Had the punishment been entered in the punishment book the schoolmaster would have escaped admonishment. At Stourbridge in 1852<sup>171</sup> a pauper complained that her child, and another, had been beaten. No marks were found on the inmate's son, but there were red marks on the other boy's shoulders. On investigation many more cases of beatings by this schoolmaster came to light, which included striking three boys with his hand, and beating others with sticks. Three boys "had black ears" occasioned "by fillips given by the fingers, and in the case of Micawdie by a box with the open hand". When questioned this boy said that the schoolmaster had

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168. KING'S NORTON GUARDIANS, Minutes. 25th. September 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 14044. B.P.L. Fl.

169. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. May 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 7.

170. P.L.B. Order, 24th. June 1847. Op cit.

171. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 20th. August 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14139.



given him twelve "custards" - or blows on the open palm of the hand with a piece of wood, "because he could not tell what S-A-L-M-O-N spelt". These charges were denied by the schoolmaster, but corroborated by the monitor, who also said that the schoolmaster had hit another boy for not writing properly. Again this was denied. The schoolmaster suggested that the whole thing was "a trumped up charge altogether". Two other boys had bruised thighs having been hit with a round ruler for not sitting properly, and the legs of a six year old boy were bruised where he had been hit with a piece of deal wood for being unable to say his letters. Another six year old had been hit with a stick for climbing on the wall, but the schoolmaster claimed that these injuries were sustained "when the boys had fallen whilst climbing a rope, and had tumbled about". Finally, and conclusively, the head of one boy was bruised to an extent that demonstrated that the schoolmaster "used violence that would bespeak inordinate passion and a cruel and malignant disposition". Again the workhouse master only reported these facts because the Poor Law Board Regulations had not been followed - the punishments were unrecorded. Had they been recorded there would probably have been no charge to answer. The schoolmaster, aged thirty nine, had twenty years teaching experience but was new to the workhouse office. He denied all charges offering to resign. All cases were proved on investigation leading to his resignation.

It was for infringing regulations rather than for beating children that the schoolmaster was punished. Sometimes even corporal punishment failed as a deterrent, as at Worcester in 1853 where the boys were considered, "not in quite so good a state of discipline as the Guardians could wish".<sup>172</sup> The Guardians resolved to erect a room to deter intransigent boys, which "will have a beneficial effect and be the means of preventing disorderly and insubordinate conduct and tend very much to improve the boys' behaviour". This was the only such room used in the county. Methods used to maintain discipline varied, with illegal methods sometimes being used. At Worcester in 1859 the schoolmistress was criticised for being "cross in her manner to the children",<sup>173</sup> having been previously cautioned for using corporal punishment on girls. She continued to administer taps on the hand with a small stick as "part of her ordinary discipline", claiming that "she scarcely considered such correction to be corporal punishment."<sup>174</sup>

Within four months the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner reported, "I have visited the Girls' School at 9.17 a.m. today. I found it entirely disorderly and the

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172. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. May 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14207.

173. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. May 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14208.

174. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. June 1854. (Reported), 24th. June 1859. (Investigated) P.R.O. MH12. 14208.

schoolmistress absent. I consider her utterly unfit for her office".<sup>175</sup> The schoolmistress, who resigned within two days,<sup>176</sup> had attended Borough Road Training School, had eighteen years teaching experience and had received very good reports in the five years at the workhouse. She was exactly the type of teacher demanded by the Poor Law but she could not cope without resorting to corporal punishment. How then did others cope? Illicit methods were undoubtedly used to control the children, a fact normally hidden from the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, H.M.I. and Guardians, because officers superior to the teacher were unlikely to pass on complaints, as they had overall responsibility for discipline so that they did not wish to be implicated. Only where excessive methods were used, or where a parent complained, did these illicit methods become apparent.

The resignation of a schoolmistress sometimes caused problems, as when at Kidderminster a schoolmistress resigned<sup>177</sup> she was not replaced for over a year. Her replacement did not settle into her post easily, having great difficulty in controlling the children, which led in 1842<sup>178</sup> to an investigation of her capabilities. The

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175. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. September 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14208. Board,

176. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. September 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14208.

177. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 27th. July 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 3.

178. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. August 1842. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 4.

schoolmistresses in this union seldom stayed in office for more than a year, with inquiries of this type common. She was found "competent", but discipline problems were to recur. Sometimes such problems became a major preoccupation for the Guardians, but few cases of indiscipline were serious. Discipline was probably overstated by both the Central Authority and Guardians, as it was thought to be one facet lacking in paupers and therefore any failure of the schoolteacher to control the children was important. An adverse report on discipline from H.M.I. caused the teacher's certificate to be withheld and no government grant was paid. In this circumstance the teacher was usually dismissed. At Stourbridge in 1853; "A wholly inexperienced schoolmistress"<sup>179</sup> resigned within two months of her appointment, but the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner admitted "the school is peculiar and requires an experienced and efficient teacher".<sup>180</sup> The girls at the workhouse he described as "unusually insubordinate and difficult". The problems of finding such teachers were great, as has already been discussed. At Evesham the schoolmistress appointed in 1867 was given fair reports in the first three years, but when seen for the first time by H.M.I. T.B. Browne in 1870<sup>181</sup> she was described

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179. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 12th. January 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14140.

180. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 6th. January 1854. P.R.O. MH12. 14140.

181. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 31st. January 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 14003.

as incompetent, and the discipline of the school as "bad". T.B. Browne recommended that she be replaced, but H.M.I.'s presence in the room may have caused discipline problems. No allowance was apparently made for this.

Good discipline was occasionally commented on, as at Martley in 1861,<sup>182</sup> and at Shipston-on-Stour in 1862, where H.M.I. stated; "The children passed a good examination and their attainment and discipline are creditable to the teacher, who could not accomplish what she has done without exercise of a rare degree of industry and intelligence".<sup>183</sup> This schoolmistress who had been a successful pupil teacher at Kirkdale Industrial School, Liverpool, came with excellent testimonials, and was eventually appointed to the West Derby Workhouse at Liverpool,<sup>184</sup> which was the largest workhouse school in the country.

Discipline problems were sometimes perceived as caused by a lack of equipment in the schoolrooms, such as desks, forms, slates and even books. The Guardians at Worcester in 1852, stated that they were "desirous that the school should be supplied with everything necessary to keep them [the children] in a proper state of discipline, order and efficiency".<sup>185</sup> They then listed a

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182. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. November 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 14087.

183. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 27th. May 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 14122. (Citing H.M.I.'s Report of 6th. August 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 14121.)

184. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 4th. February 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14122.

185. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 11th. October 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14207.

large number of items considered necessary to do this, but H.M.I. commented<sup>186</sup> that Guardians should be vigilant when spending public money, they could not make all of the alterations that were desirable. Undoubtedly, however, the frequent change of children was the major cause of discipline problems. At Stourbridge in 1848, it was said; "The girls are very backward. They are young and change frequently".<sup>187</sup> At the same union as late as 1868 recently admitted children still caused problems, which concerned H.M.I. who sometimes took such matters into account when examining children, as at Bromsgrove in 1866, when H.M.I. stated; "The children have passed a fair examination according to their age, and the time they have been in the school".<sup>188</sup> Discipline problems were reported at Pershore in 1848,<sup>189</sup> but on investigation there was no cause for concern. However, it was suggested that "in future the bell in the morning will be rung twice instead of once as henceforth at an interval of 15 minutes, and the children kept upstairs till the time after the adults, so that the schoolmistress may better enable to meet them coming

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186. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 11th. October 1852. Ibid.

187. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 18th. February 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14138.

188. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 6th. November 1866. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

189. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 18th. January 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 4.

down". The presence of adult paupers in the same room as the children was still considered threatening, it was solved by altering the routine which was considered all important when dealing with pauper children.

#### **viii. The Dismissal of School Staff.**

There were cases of dismissal of school staff for maltreatment of children, for drunkenness, for other misdemeanours and for supposedly sending an obscene letter. The schoolmaster at Stourbridge in 1845,<sup>190</sup> was accused of sending an obscene letter to a serving girl in the town. The offending letter was sent to a handwriting expert, who could not prove who had written it. In spite of this the sexually explicit nature of the letter required that a person even suspected of writing it must be dismissed. The Guardians were told to demand the schoolmaster's resignation, but he refused to resign. He wrote to the Poor Law Commission stating that he had only a "speaking acquaintance with the girl". The investigating inspector disputed this, as "he (the schoolmaster) took walks with her"<sup>191</sup> and said the schoolmaster must resign. At this stage the Guardians became impatient to appoint a replacement schoolmaster.

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190. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. January 1846, P.R.O. MH12. 14137.

191. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. February 1846, P.R.O. MH12. 14137.

They banned the supposed offender from the workhouse premises, but he still refused to resign invoking the support of a minority of Guardians in this. He was eventually dismissed in 1846<sup>192</sup> in spite of the case against him not being proved. One can appreciate that the Poor Law Commission wanted no scandal, but this dismissal decision appeared unjust because there was no substantive evidence against the schoolmaster. The schoolmistress of Upton-on-Severn was dismissed in 1847<sup>193</sup> for stealing 10lbs. of coal from the workhouse, whilst the schoolmistress at Pershore in 1848<sup>194</sup> was charged with unspecified misconduct by the Matron. She resigned,<sup>195</sup> but later<sup>196</sup> she asked the Guardians to make an investigation about "recent reports circulating in Pershore during the time that she held that office". The Guardians refused saying that she was offered the chance of an enquiry at the time of her resignation, which she had refused. At Droitwich in 1853<sup>197</sup> the

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192. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 21st. February 1846, P.R.O. MH12. 14137.

193. UPTON-ON-SEVERN-BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. June 1847, P.R.O. MH12. 14182, W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 4.

194. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. June 1848, P.R.O. MH12. 14106, W.C.R.O. Loc 251. Acc. 409. Par. 5.

195. Ibid.

196. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. December 1848, P.R.O. MH12. 14106, W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 409. Par. 5.

197. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. March 1853, P.R.O. MH12. 13935, W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 6.



schoolmistress inevitably resigned having suffered a miscarriage. The workhouse master was said to be the father of the child,<sup>198</sup> so that he (and his wife) resigned later. When she applied for a testimonial, "in spite of my not deserving one, as to the respectability of my family, and also to the competency of my teaching",<sup>199</sup> she was surprisingly supplied with one, although the post she applied for was not as a teacher. Her letter also asked that no reporters be allowed into the room for the enquiry, "as being an orphan and having my bread to seek, this might be the means of doing me harm". The schoolmaster and schoolmistress at Worcester in 1855 were charged by the master and matron of the workhouse with "familiarity";<sup>200</sup> a charge they denied. They countercharged the master with use of bad language and ill temper, and the matron with a trivial offence. The charges against the teachers and the master were investigated, with the master being censured and the schoolmaster and schoolmistress being told to "avoid familiarity in future".<sup>201</sup> Unfounded charges

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198. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 16th. March 1853, P.R.O. MH12. 13935, W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401, par. 6.

199. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. April 1853, P.R.O. MH12. 13953, W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401, Par. 6.

200. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. January 1855, P.R.O. MH12. 14208.

201. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 31st. January 1855, P.R.O. MH12. 14208.

were sometimes brought against a schoolteacher because inmates were inevitably vindictive about workhouse staff. The new Schoolmistress at Shipston-on-Stour in 1851<sup>202</sup> was said to have arrived back at the workhouse with the master, when both were drunk. A subsequent inquiry found this claim to be malicious. At Bromsgrove in 1856, the matron "infringed the schoolmistresses character", but no fault was found in this case.<sup>203</sup> The school staff had to be beyond reproach and the matron was thanked for bringing the matter to the attention of the Guardians. At Droitwich in 1864<sup>204</sup> the schoolmistress was dismissed for improper behaviour with the porter. The schoolmaster at Kidderminster in 1869, who was the nephew of the master, became "pro tempore" master when his uncle died and when he returned to his duties as schoolmaster in early 1869 he was "accused by an inmate, near confinement, of having connexion with her".<sup>205</sup> He admitted the offence and was dismissed,<sup>206</sup> but meanwhile he had applied for a post as

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202. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. February 1851, P.R.O. MH12. 14119.

203. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. September 1856, P.R.O. MH12. 13911, W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

204. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. March 1864, P.R.O. MH12. 13966, W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

205. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. January 1869, P.R.O. MH12. 14024, W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 19.

206. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. February 1869, P.R.O. MH12. 14204, W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403, Par. 19.

master at Pershore Union. However, the Guardians there were informed of his offence thus debarring him from that post. His name was automatically added to a central register of dismissals kept to ensure that offenders were not employed in the Poor Law system again. Such schoolteachers were obviously not regarded as suitable models of moral rectitude for workhouse pauper children.

#### **ix. Conclusions.**

Education was seen as very important for workhouse children. There was a consensus amongst the Guardians, the public at large and amongst workhouse staff that education was beneficial for workhouse children. The Guardians and the general public regarded education as curative of pauperism, whilst the workhouse officers probably considered it beneficial because it occupied children's time whilst they were in the workhouse, preventing them from becoming nuisances. This aspect of their treatment was very carefully monitored and controlled. The workhouse schoolteacher was continually scrutinised for the Central Authority by the Poor Law Inspector who was responsible for ensuring the person appointed to the teachers' post were suitable and that they performed their duties in accordance with centrally applied Rules and Regulations, thus "National Uniformity" was ensured. The Workhouse Inspectors'

visits were, however, irregular and were seldom more than quarterly. There must therefore have been doubt as to the quality of workhouse education and its supervision. The appointment of an inspector specific to the school was undoubtedly seen as an advance, but he attended the workhouse only annually. The problem of monitoring was solved in the eyes of the Central Poor Law Authority by the creation of a bureaucratic hierarchy amongst officers. One officer inspected his subordinates. In this hierarchy, because of his superior social position, the workhouse chaplain was dominant. He had oversight of the school and because of his middle class-status he was trusted by the Central Poor Law Authority. It was believed that he would accept utilitarian orthodoxy and hence ensure compliance to national Rules and Regulations. This was usually the case, but there were instances where a particularly forceful chaplain overruled the Workhouse Inspectors. In spite of his lack of expertise in elementary education the workhouse chaplain ensured that the workhouse was a "total institution" dominated by Anglicanism.

After about 1838 workhouse teachers were given certificates of competency, which was long before a similar system was adopted for non Poor Law elementary schools. In spite of this there was continuing evidence

of low standards of teaching and attainment in workhouse schools, although the use of regular inspection gradually raised these standards. The lowest standards of all existed in small rural unions, where the salary offered to the schoolteachers was very low indeed so that no qualified teacher would take up such appointment. In these workhouses education was at a very minimal standard. Rural unions also tended to attract schoolmistresses. Schoolmasters were only found in urban workhouses in Worcestershire throughout the period to 1871. In most cases the post of schoolteacher appears to have been unattractive and those appointed did not stay for long.

Only for five years after the 1862 "Revised Code" were workhouse schools directly comparable with elementary schools. It was at this time that capitation allowances added to a basic salary were used to calculate the workhouse teachers' salaries. Outside Poor Law schools the result of the "Revised Code" was to reduce education costs, deleteriously affecting the school curriculum, but this does not appear to have happened in county workhouse schools. The gradual improvement in all aspects of standards continued. The salaries offered to workhouse school staff became marginally more competitive as salaries in non-Poor Law schools

worsened, but they were still insufficient to attract and maintain the right sorts of teacher to county workhouse schools, in contrast to the situation described earlier. The lifestyle of a teacher in a workhouse, virtually incarcerated, as he was, in a 'total closed institution' involved privations, the tendency to become institutionalised and to become tainted by association with the poor, which remained an unattractive prospect. Once appointed, if a workhouse schoolteacher remained in the system there appeared to be little chance of promotion as few Worcestershire workhouse teachers moved to better posts. The vast majority of schoolmasters left for other occupations, whilst many schoolmistresses married and left the profession.

Problems of attracting applicants for the school posts in workhouses were further enhanced by the demands of Guardians for what were regarded as suitable applicants. The highest moral standards were expected of applicants, because the schoolteacher was seen as a counterbalance to the insidious adverse influence of the workhouse on the children. The result of this in combination with the low salary offered and the unattractive nature of the work and living conditions was that few suitable applicants came forward. There were many cases where no

applications resulted from advertisements. In these circumstances an adult inmate was sometimes put in charge of the school, a practice wholly disapproved of by the Central Authority. Another attempt by J. Kay-Shuttleworth to solve the problem of a supply of workhouse teachers was to take able pauper children as apprentice teachers. This was adopted in a couple of Worcestershire Unions. At the end of a period of apprenticeship these individuals were then to be sent for training at a College. However, this did not happen within the county, but elsewhere the 'graduates' of such Colleges found the workhouse less conducive than the elementary schools, to whom they were most attractive applicants.

Once appointed, having passed through the very exacting selection procedure, workhouse schoolteachers were under constant scrutiny. This together with the problems of controlling sometimes unruly inmate children, particularly those constantly coming and going from the workhouses and the privations of workhouse life led to problems. Quite often such teachers overpunished children and encountered the wrath of the Poor Law Authorities. They were often dismissed or forced to resign. Many others left their posts of their own volition because they found them unpleasant and

unconducive to health. Only rarely did a workhouse schoolteacher stay in post for a prolonged period.

The Rules and Regulations applied to workhouse schoolteachers were uniform, but the manner of interpretation was not. Faced with the problem of having no applicants for such a post Guardians would appoint unsuitable applicants and attempt to cover this up. The contrast between rural and urban unions within Worcestershire regarding the quality of schoolteachers was apparent. In rural unions the salary that could be offered remained low and this restricted the quality of the applicant. It was also the case that no rural union appointed a schoolmaster or an industrial trainer and the quality of education offered must therefore have been influenced. The implication of this was that rural workhouse schools were co-educational, in contrast to many contemporary rural elementary schools. Ironically, in spite of evidence that schoolmistresses were from superior social status positions to their male contemporaries, schoolmasters were obviously preferred because they were presumed to be able to cope better than women, although this was probably merely indicative of contemporary gender bias. In spite of the Principle of "National Uniformity", the educational provision in Worcestershire workhouses varied considerably. The



transitory inmate child, who belonged to a section of the working class continually existing on the margins of pauperism, was unlikely to regularly attend elementary school outside the workhouse. The analysis of relative eligibility would have to be tempered with this realisation. In spite of the provision of industrial training, not available in elementary schools, the teaching offered in the workhouse was probably "less eligible", because these institutions remained unattractive to work in and few good teachers were attracted to them. However, the workhouse school was likely to be "more eligible" for its individual inmate scholars, who would probably have received no education outside the workhouse. This type of analysis would however have been difficult to sustain had Ross<sup>207</sup> or Obermann's<sup>208</sup> perspective based on national Poor Law Authority sources been used. In stark contrast, however, Digby,<sup>209</sup> and others,<sup>210</sup> who based their work on local sources, drew similar conclusions to those presented here.

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207. ROSS, A.M., "The Care and Education of Pauper Children in England and Wales 1834 to 1896", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, London University, 1955.

208. OBERMANN, S.P., "The Education in Poor Law Institutions in England and Wales During the Period 1834 to 1870", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1982.

209. DIGBY, A., Pauper Palaces, R.K.P., 1978.

210. Such as HUGHES, D.B., "The Education of Pauper Children in Monmouthshire 1834 to 1929", Unpublished M.A. Dissertaton, University of Cardiff, 1967.

As Himmelfarb suggests, the definition of poverty and the way it was regarded altered between 1834 and 1871. The changed attitudes and methods of workhouse teachers demonstrated this well. The children were, after about 1840, regarded as different from adult paupers. They were treated accordingly by the workhouse officers. Relatively quickly, however, education became regarded as an essential in the treatment of children in workhouses to ensure that they did not become lifelong paupers. These developments and those that followed led to workhouse education being comparable with elementary education, indicating the altered attitude to poverty described by Himmelfarb.<sup>211</sup>

Regarding the workhouse conforming to Goffman's analysis as a "total institution" there is unique evidence available for considering workhouse teachers in this aspect. Such teachers were concerned that they would become institutionalised and hence marked by their workhouse experience for life. The teachers, like their pauper charges, were incarcerated in the workhouse for a prolonged period. Their life style there was contingent on the same Rules and Regulations as the inmates so that logically they must have been institutionalised in a manner very similar to the inmates. In these

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211. HIMMELFARB, G., The Idea of Poverty, Faber, 1984.

circumstances they were probably unemployable in other than an institutional context if they had spent a prolonged period employed in workhouses. It was arguably this realisation that made such teachers transitory, with few of them willing to spend a whole working life in a Poor Law institution. Regarding the institutionalisation of the staff the workhouse conformed exactly to the model of the total institution erected by Goffman in Asylums.<sup>212</sup> It remains to examine the implications of this for the methods, organisation and the curriculum of the workhouse school.

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212. GOFFMAN, E., Asylums, Penguin, 1968. Introduction.

## CHAPTER 6.

### THE WORKHOUSE SCHOOL - THE ADMINISTRATION, THE CURRICULUM AND THE PEDAGOGY.

#### i. Principles.

It was continually emphasised by the Central Poor Law Authority throughout the nineteenth century that education was the most important single element in the treatment of indoor pauper children and this led to what has been referred to as "the state's incursion ....[being]....most fully developed in workhouse schooling in the mid-nineteenth century".<sup>1</sup> This was indicated by the amount of administrative literature that related to that subject. Contemporary opinions such as those of Godwin <sup>2</sup> suggest that this was for the good of the children, but retrospective analysis such as that of Donajgrodski <sup>3</sup> and Johnson <sup>4</sup> suggest a "social police" function for the Poor Law. <sup>5</sup> Social control was seen as the motive for this and J. Kay used similar reasoning contemporaneously in 1862 in referring to "the preservation of internal peace....[depending]....on the education of the working-classes".<sup>6</sup> J. Kay-Shuttleworth's earlier

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1. DIGBY, A. Pauper Palaces, R.K.P. 1978, p.188.

2. GODWIN, George. Town Swamps and Social Bridges, London. 1859. Reprinted. Ed. A. King. Leicester University Press, 1972. p.26. Godwin was an urban/social reformer and architect. He was editor of The Builder.

3. DONAJGRODSKI, A.J. "Social Police and the Bureaucratic Elite", in DONAJGRODSKI, A.J. (ed.) Social Control in 19th. Century Britain, Croom-Helm, 1977.

4. JOHNSON, R. "Educating the Educators: 'Experts' and the State 1833-9", in DONAJGRODSKI, Ibid.

5. DONAJGRODSKI, Ibid. pp.186-7.

6. KAY-SHUTTLEWORTH, J. Four Periods of Public Education, London, 1862, p.61.

connections with Poor Law Administration had involved him in Poor Law education when he had encouraged the development of workhouse schools. Elementary education in general, and workhouse education in particular, was seen in Benthamite terms.

From a Marxist perspective <sup>7</sup> the education offered can be seen as creating a false-consciousness which calmed potential social disorder. The connection between workhouse education and elementary education was always apparent in the period to 1870. It has been suggested that "Although the Poor Law never had control over education, the tenets of the period, influenced by the doctrine of 'laissez faire', and a mandate of complete parental responsibility for children, ensured that the elementary school remained in many minds a type of poor relief".<sup>8</sup> The importance of workhouse education as a social control mechanism was obvious. This chapter investigates the nature of workhouse education, the variation of education between the various Worcestershire Poor Law Unions, the alternative education systems considered, such as District and Separate Schools, and the nature of the education that evolved once those solutions were rejected. There is detailed analysis of the pedagogy, organisation and

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7. SIMON, B. Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870 Lawrence and Wishart, 1974, p.168.

8. MIDDLETON, A. and WEITZMAN, S. A Place for Everyone, Gollancz, 1976. p.58.

management of the county's workhouse schools and of their curriculum.

Under the Old Poor Law there was rarely provision of schooling for children in the poor houses. James Kay (later J. Kay-Shuttleworth) who was an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner in East Anglia, before he became first Secretary to the Privy Council Committee on Education, saw education as "one of the most important means of eradicating the germ of pauperism from the rising generation".<sup>9</sup> W.H.T. Hawley, an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner under the New Poor Law, described youth in poor houses "languishing in idleness and ignorance",<sup>10</sup> yet the passage of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 did not bring immediate improvement. The Poor Law Commission was to provide education in workhouses and encourage Boards of Guardians to provide schools, although some Guardians were reticent to do this. The Central Authority continued their endeavour, but Guardians lacked the enthusiasm to promote education. Worcestershire Unions lacked what has been referred to as "vigour in their support" <sup>11</sup> of workhouse schooling.

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9. KAY, J.P. "On the Establishing of Pauper Schools", Journal of the Royal Statistical Society No. 1. 1838, p.23. Cited by DIGBY, Op cit. p.180.

10. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. P.P. (510) XLIX. p.22.

11. ROSS, A.M. "The Care and Education of Pauper Children in England and Wales 1834-96", Ph.D. Thesis, University College London, 1955. p.71.

By 1839, however, <sup>12</sup> Kidderminster school was working for more than the 3 hours per day demanded by the Poor Law Commission. The school functioned from 9.00 a.m. to noon and from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. in winter, and 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. in summer, which were similar hours to those quoted for Westhampnett, a union cited as a good example in 1837.<sup>13</sup>

Kidderminster was the most active of all county unions regarding education probably because it had a large, more threatening, urban population. There were larger numbers of child inmates, including orphans and foundlings, in this urban area than anywhere elsewhere in the county apart from Dudley. Education, including industrial training, was an obvious way of occupying children's time. Hickson, a self professed expert on the Poor Laws, suggested in 1838 that schools were "as bad as is possible to be imagined",<sup>14</sup> but in some areas of the country, including parts of Worcestershire, the provision of elementary schools was inferior to the education offered in the workhouses. The situation was to change. In particular cases, such as at Petworth in Sussex,<sup>15</sup> education was provided in workhouses and it

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12. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. August 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

13. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837. P.P. (131) XVII. Part 1. 2nd. Report. p.48. Question.3666.

14. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, P.P. 1837-8 (202) XVIII. Pt.1. Questionnaire. 13185.

15. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837. Op cit. 2nd. Report. Question 969.

was commented; "The girls are taught everything that can be taught for the purpose of making them useful servants, cleaning the house and mending-clothes" and "the boys are taught to read and write".<sup>16</sup> But such education was not generally available. Such children were according to J. Kay in 1837 likely to become "for a time, and probably a long period....dependent upon the ratepayers" and they were "infested with vermin" and "often covered with itch". They became "brutish....ignorant, vicious and disorderly...." because they received "no sort of education in letters, or a general training in habits of industry".<sup>17</sup>

The Guardians represented ratepayers' interests. Whether education was offered was determined by an interaction between the demands of the Central Authority (the Poor Law Commission) and the needs of the local community as perceived by Guardians. Education was not available everywhere for the poor outside the workhouse, so that some parishes sending children to the workhouses had no elementary schools. At Westhampnett in Sussex in 1837 <sup>18</sup> the Clerk suggested that education in areas of the Union where no National School existed was inferior to the

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16. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837. *ibid.* 2nd. Report. Question 971.

17. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1838. P.P. (202) XVIII. Pt.1. 14th. Report. Question 4403.

18. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837. *Op. cit.* 2nd. Report. Question 3683.



education of the pauper children in the workhouse. He was able to assure the Select Committee "...[workhouse children] were growing up....being able to read and write."<sup>19</sup> Arithmetic was also taught in the morning. In the afternoon they were "classed as tailors, shoemakers and straw platters."<sup>20</sup> The girls were taught "the general duties of household servants."<sup>21</sup> In Petworth Union<sup>22</sup> reading was taught, but not writing or arithmetic, a situation countenanced by the Guardians.<sup>23</sup> Elsewhere in Sussex education was not offered. The situation in Worcestershire was similarly mixed.

As the education available in the parishes from which the children in the workhouse came varied, so some children were "more eligible" than others. Workhouse education appeared to be superior to schooling offered in large tracts of the country. In burgeoning urban areas where "immigrants" were crowded into densely packed poor quality housing there were no schools. The poorest areas of urban Worcestershire, like many other similar areas, had few elementary schools. It was from

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19. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837. Ibid. 2nd. Report. Question 3675.

20. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837. Ibid. 2nd. Report. Question 3670.

21. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837. Ibid. 2nd. Report. Question 3686.

22. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837. P.P. (481) XVII. Part 1. 1st. Report. Question 1833.

23. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837. Ibid.

these areas that many child inmates in workhouses came, and these children were "more eligible" with regard to education than their non-pauper contemporaries from their home parish. The Poor Law Commission wanted to attain "Less Eligibility", but Chadwick stated in 1837 "the Commissioners wished to make no distinction between a pauper child's education, and an independent labourer's child".<sup>24</sup> The benefits of education in workhouses outweighed the erosion of the basic "Principles of Poor Law Administration". The Bishop of London stated in 1834 "...improvement had taken place, where education has been imparted to the labouring-classes...." On the evidence of the 1832 Poor Law Inquiry "the superiority of the educated over the uneducated labourer" was shown. He cited the illiterate as "most dangerous".<sup>25</sup> He compared Stockport and Oldham workers on the basis of their different qualities. He thought that the rate of instruction in the elementary schools determined the quality of these workers. The educated, literate, pauper was less threatening. Education for pauper children was thus desirable.

School inspection after 1839 demonstrated the poor state of elementary education and before 1840 workhouse education, where it existed, was certainly superior to

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24. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837. P.P. (350) XVII. Part II. 12th. Report. Question 12611.

25. S.C. on Education 1834, P.P. (572) IX, Question 2488.

that received by non-paupers outside the workhouse. E. Gulson,<sup>26</sup> an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner believed that this would "enable them [pauper children] to provide for themselves independently". However, around 40% of workhouse school pupils were "transient" (Tenbury Wells workhouse had 61.1% transient pupils when investigated in 1851). Such transient children were relatively unaffected by the education they received in the workhouse. The Newcastle Report criticised the mixing of "transient pupils" with the more permanent ones and such mixing was described as a "fatal error" because such children "bring in with them evil enough to undo all the good that the teachers have been labouring to instil into their scholars".<sup>27</sup> One schoolmistress was so depressed by this that "she felt she was training up girls for a life of vice and depravity....", but as Assistant Commissioner R. Weale suggested in 1861<sup>28</sup> children outside the workhouse were "subject to the worst external influences" and they "form a most dangerous class to be let loose amongst orphan and deserted children". Rehabilitation was considered to be vitally important, outweighing the importance of the principle of "Less Eligibility". In fact as early as 1836<sup>29</sup> the Poor Law Commission suggested that children

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26. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837 (140) XVIII. Pt.1. 1st. Report. Question 987.

27. N.R.C., 1861. P.P. (2794-1) XXI. Vol.I. Pt.I. p.355.

28. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op cit. p.4.

29. P.L.C. 2nd. Annual Report, 1836, H.L.L.

be treated as a special case to whom the normal tenets of Poor Law Administration need not be applied.

J. Kay in 1838 wanted to "combine sound religious education with a careful industrial training, and such an amount of secular instruction, as shall invigorate the children, and thereby increase their chances of maintaining themselves in after life"<sup>30</sup> so "securing the cessation of their dependence, by elevating their moral condition".<sup>31</sup> It was also to ameliorate their condition by raising "the moral and intellectual atmosphere of the workhouse to the highest pitch".<sup>32</sup> This he suggested should be done in spite of infringing the "Principle of Less Eligibility".<sup>33</sup> Assistant Poor Law Commissioner E. Gulson agreed. He preferred to give advantage to the pauper child because "that evil is very much less than the evil of allowing children to be brought up in such a way that they must remain paupers",<sup>34</sup> although J. Kay saw the workhouse school "presenting most formidable difficulties"<sup>35</sup> in doing this. Whilst the education offered was "sufficient and

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30. S.C. on the Education of the Poorer Classes, 1837-8. P.P. (589) VII. Question 122.

31. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1838. P.P. (220) XVIII. Part I. 16th. Report. Question 4799.

32. S.C. on the Education of the Poorer Classes, 1837-8. Op cit. Question 124.

33. S.C. on the Education of the Poorer Classes, 1837-8. Op cit. Question 125.

34. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. Vol. III. Op cit. Question 992.

35. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. Op cit. 13th. Report. Question 4402.

satisfactory", because "they are always taught to read, and generally to write; in most cases they are taught a little ciphering, and in general....the girls to sew and knit; and a variety of employment for the boys"<sup>36</sup> the child was still resident in the damaging environment of the workhouse.

In an attempt to compensate for this environment at Kidderminster in 1839 the chaplain stated "suitable prayers are read at the commencement and termination of school hours" and "the children have made considerable progress in reading, and most often can say the catechism and can answer questions from it. They are learning the parables, and can answer questions from those they know tolerably well".<sup>37</sup> Writing was not taught and there was disagreement about teaching this skill to the "lower orders". Bartley in 1885 suggested that "such skills might make the young restless, or facilitate forgeries",<sup>38</sup> but by the 1895 edition of his book he had removed this reference, presumably because it now sounded anachronistic. The school curriculum presumed the need of the working classes for an "imposed morality" in a manner similar to that described by Himmelfarb. This was mainly provided by religious

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36. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. P.P. (161) XVIII, Pt.I. 6th. and 7th. Report. Question 2529.

37. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. March 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

38. BARTLEY, G.C.T. The People's Schools, London, 1885, p.372. Comparison with 1895 Edition.

education as in elementary schools, but the atmosphere of the "total institution" was also seen as moral. Prior to 1834 an Act of Parliament of 1828 repealed the Test Acts and provided that a child was not to be educated in a creed other than that of his parents, or if orphaned in a creed "to which his godparents may object".<sup>39</sup> This was included in the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. Anglicanism predominated in the workhouse, but in spite of this the workhouse was still considered no place for children. It continued to "manufacture paupers" and "there is no provision (at any rate for any boy or girl) for any exercise or mental facility".<sup>40</sup> The child's timetable left little time for even the youngest child to play. Assistant Commissioner Hall suggested <sup>41</sup> that a garden for play was necessary in all workhouses, but in many workhouses only yards were provided. J. Kay stated that children gained exercise from work, but there should be facilities for "gymnastic exercise" on a "circular swing".<sup>42</sup> There was no such apparatus in Worcestershire workhouses.

In some places, as E. Gulson suggested, <sup>43</sup> children were allowed to leave the workhouse for exercise, but in

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39. 9 Geo. IV. c.17.

40. 4 & 5 Will. IV. c.78. s.15.

41. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. Op cit. 6th. and 7th. Report. Question 2552.

42. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. 14th. Report, Op cit. Question 4507.

43. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. P.P. (140) XVIII. Pt.1. 3rd. Report. Question 951.

most workhouses they could not and there was a lack of facilities for exercise. In spite of this, the children were said to be "healthy decidedly so".<sup>44</sup> Edwin Chadwick asked the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners in the 1840's to reply "at as early a period as may suffice for the collection of accurate information" about the state of the workhouse schools.<sup>45</sup> They were asked:

"1. The state of pauper education prior to the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act.

2. Improvements that had been introduced into the pauper schools since the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act.

3. The further improvements that might be introduced into pauper schools, and the obstacles to further improvement."

How these questions were answered was a matter of conjecture as no detailed knowledge of the education in workhouse schools prior to 1834 existed. Any retrospective analysis was therefore suspect.

## **ii. The Curriculum.**

The intellectual diet offered in workhouses was said to be severely limited because of the relative youth and inexperience of the schoolteachers. Improvement appeared difficult because the Bible, Prayer Books and various religious tracts were the only reading material

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44. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. Op cit. 3rd. Report. Question 956.

45. Letter from the Marquis of Normanby, Home Secretary, to Edwin Chadwick. 3rd. February 1840. Letter to Guardians - Same date. P.L.C. 6th. Annual Report. 1840. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1295.

available. At Kidderminster for the first time in July 1845 one pound was spent on "a few books of instructive, moral and amusing character",<sup>46</sup> but the choice was still the chaplain's. After 1844, however, the H.M.I.'s recommended books and backed their recommendations by refusing the Government Grant until their recommendations were implemented, which was an opportunity for non-scriptural books to be introduced into the workhouses. The Poor Law Commission had decided in 1835 that children were to be given "such other instructions....as are calculated to train them to habits of usefulness and virtue".<sup>47</sup> In 1838 they amplified this, stating the purpose of workhouse education was "fitting the children for obtaining the situation of independent labourers and performing their duties in after life."<sup>48</sup>

Individuals elected to the Board of Guardians inevitably disagreed with one another about education and there were contrasts between the representatives of rural parishes and those of urban ones. The Select Committee of 1838 referred to "farmers....not aware of the necessity of education....",<sup>49</sup> who refused to increase

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46. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. July 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14018. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 5.

47. P.L.C. Order, 2nd. March 1835. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 65.

48. P.L.C. Circular, 22nd. June 1838, W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 65.

49. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. Op. cit. Question 986.



the teacher's salary to attract able teachers and Chadwick <sup>50</sup> suggested that rural Guardians resisted expenditure, as they did not appreciate the importance of education, having received little education themselves. Assistant Commissioner R. Weale suggested that the Guardians in Worcestershire in 1837 did demand education, although they were uncertain of the sort of education necessary. R. Weale himself was equally uncertain as to what to recommend because of "Less Eligibility". He found "the education of the peasantry and the lower order of artizans....in such a degraded state, that it is impossible to devise a system for a workhouse which will not be more attractive and useful".<sup>51</sup> He wanted children taught a trade, insisting that such education should be in the workhouse school. The Newcastle Royal Commission commented that "in all but the largest towns....[Guardians]....are taken from a class generally indifferent to education, often hostile to it".<sup>52</sup> The ambivalence of some Boards of Guardians may have been explicable because unions composed exclusively of urban parishes or exclusively of rural parishes agreed about education. The nature of the area appeared important in determining attitudes to education. Unions composed of a mixture of urban and rural parishes disagreed. For instance at Pershore in

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50. FINER, S.E. The Life and Times of Edwin Chadwick Methuen, London, 1952. pp.152-3.

51. A.P.L.C. R. Weale's Report. 12-9-37. P.R.O. MH32/85.

52. N.R.C., 1861 P.P. (2794-1) XXI. Part.I. p.359.

1839 the Visiting Committee proposed that "a quantity of pens, ink, paper and other necessary articles" to teach writing be purchased, but the whole Board of Guardians countered that "it is quite unnecessary to teach the children in the Union Workhouse the accomplishment of writing".<sup>53</sup> The Visiting Committee, composed of individuals who lived in the urban area close to the workhouse, was untypical. The majority of Guardians from more distant rural parishes opposed writing being taught, but when the 1844 "Parish Apprentices Act" required pauper apprentices be able "to read and write their own names unaided",<sup>54</sup> the Guardians' attention was drawn to the need for writing to be taught. Pershore ordered the teaching of writing in 1845.<sup>55</sup>

Martley Union decided to resist the Poor Law Commission's demands to teach writing, thereby breaking the law. Disciplinary action was brought against the workhouse master, a man whose appointment in 1843<sup>56</sup> had caused disquiet. He was described then as "insolvent" and was therefore not officially eligible for appointment, but the Guardians appointed him anyway. He

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53. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. August 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14105. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 2.

54. 8 & 9 Vict. c.83.

55. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 11th. February 1845. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 3.

56. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. February 1843. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

was later charged with inefficiency, but was defended by the Chairman of the Guardians. Education was discussed at this inquiry and it was stated that whilst there had been schoolmistresses at Martley since 1839 <sup>57</sup> none stayed long and two had left in 1845. After this the school was left unattended for almost a year.

The Guardians decided to cease teaching writing at this time <sup>58</sup> and the Poor Law Commission were informed. The Guardians justified their decision because "pauper child inmates of the workhouse received as good an education as that generally given in the country and they do not feel themselves justified in going to any expense whereby they might receive advantages that are not attainable by the children who support their families without parochial relief." These reasons were regarded as "insufficient", however, and the Guardians were threatened with a writ of mandamus. A precedent resisting the teaching of writing was not to be allowed and the Poor Law Commission stated that the children "ought to receive such an amount of instruction as will fit them for good situations in after life."<sup>59</sup> They criticised the lack of instruction in writing, arithmetic and reading, which was commented on because it was totally Scriptural. The Poor Law Commission demanded

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57. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. March 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14080.

58. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. January 1846. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

59. Ibid. Letter to Martley Guardians.

that a schoolmaster should be appointed, in spite of an Order in 1837 <sup>60</sup> that small unions need only appoint a schoolmaster, or a schoolmistress. The Guardians were accused of having "both boys and girls under the care of the schoolmistress". An "efficient schoolmaster" was demanded, but the Guardians refused. <sup>61</sup> Assistant Poor Law Commissioner E. Gulson insisted that "a well qualified schoolmaster's appointment should be enforced". <sup>62</sup> He later stated; "I am far from satisfied with the state of the house or school".

When the Guardians appointed a new schoolmistress she began to teach writing, but when the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner revisited seven months later he reported; "I found no improvement in arrangements had been effected by the Guardians for the education of children in the school". A girl aged 16 years old who had been in the workhouse for six and a half years was described as "nice looking" and "intelligent". She was to be apprenticed, but he said "she does not know how to write a word; nor does she know the use of a single figure". <sup>63</sup> She was thus officially not eligible to be apprenticed. Other children were in a similar state, but the Chairman

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60. P.L.C. Order 21st January 1837. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 65.

61. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. February 1846. Letter to P.L.C. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

62. Ibid. Letter to Martley Guardians.

63. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. September 1846. Report of A.P.L.C. E. Gulson. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

of the Guardians insisted that the education offered was "sufficient". E. Gulson stated in a marginal comment, <sup>64</sup> that he had received support from a clergyman an ex-officio Guardian (possibly the chaplain).

The schoolmistress was allowed to stay, but a schoolmaster was demanded in addition. It was said that if one was not appointed the Guardians would be issued with a "Special Order" and the government grant would be withheld. The Guardians were perturbed by this, but they resolved to leave the matter for further consideration, a prevarication lasting for over a month. They refused to comply, <sup>65</sup> possibly hoping that delay would mean that the new authority (the Poor Law Board) would interpret the rules in Martley's favour. The Assistant Poor Law Commissioner E. Gulson appended another note <sup>66</sup> again demanding that a "Special Order" be issued compelling the appointment of a schoolmaster. The Guardians again refused saying they would only allow these changes if they were "ordered" to do so. Although E. Gulson wanted them ordered <sup>67</sup> the matter was left in abeyance.

The Guardians now offered to appoint another schoolmistress to replace the existing one whom they

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64. Ibid. Appended to P.L.C. copy of Minutes.

65. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th, November 1846. Letter to P.L.C. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

66. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. November 1846. Appended to letter to Martley Guardians. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

67. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. December 1846. Letter to P.L.C. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

said was "temporary" <sup>68</sup>, but she had been in office twenty months and she had been sanctioned in the normal way. The Poor Law Commission had approved this "permanent appointment" and <sup>69</sup> she had satisfactorily completed a three month trial, but the pressure affected her and she resigned. <sup>70</sup> The Guardians were adamant that they would not appoint a schoolmaster and that they would not teach writing or arithmetic. They appointed another schoolmistress and the H.M.I. commented that this schoolmistress refused to teach writing and that "she is probably supposing that she is acting in accordance with the members of the Board", <sup>71</sup> but he reported; "A clergyman expressed to me a strong desire that such an order be sent". <sup>72</sup> Instead the Poor Law Board withheld the schoolmistress's salary apparently preferring an oblique approach placing the schoolmistress in an untenable position. They drew the schoolmistress's attention to the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act regarding education and to the legal penalties under that legislation. The Guardians were informed of this. <sup>73</sup> They were clearly concerned about this letter, but

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68. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. March 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14082.

69. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 21st. June 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14081.

70. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 29th. July 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14082.

71. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th, August 1847. Report of H.M.I. P.R.O. MH12. 14082.

72. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. May 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14082.

73. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 17th. May 1848. Letter to P.L.B.. P.R.O. MH12. 14082.

unwilling to relent. In July 1848 the Poor Law Board stated that "the Board of Guardians have no discretion in interpreting the law, the original intention of pauper education being to reduce reliance on "elecmosynary relief". <sup>74</sup> The children in the workhouse could not be blamed for their position. A copy of this letter was sent to the Privy Council Committee on Education. In July 1848 <sup>75</sup> the H.M.I. reported that the Guardians had again ordered the schoolmistress not to teach writing or arithmetic. In spite of this her efficiency had improved and he issued a "Certificate of Probation". He considered the schoolmistress blameless for the situation, although the Guardians wrote <sup>76</sup> denying they had forbidden writing and arithmetic to be taught. They had "only refused to give her (the schoolmistress) facilities to do so" - the fault they said was the schoolmistress's. They would allow writing and arithmetic to be taught in future.

The Poor Law Board gained compliance by applying pressure to a defenceless and innocent employee, instead of using a "Special Order". They were satisfied with this administrative ploy and the principle was considered so important that the case was publicised in

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74. "ELECTMOSYNARY" - This meant Poor Law Relief likely to increase and prolong dependence on the Poor Rate.

75. P.L.B. letter to P.C.C.E. 10th. July 1848. P.R.O. MH32/87.

76. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 21st. August 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14082.

the "Official Circular", without naming the union.<sup>77</sup> When Martley Guardians wrote to the Poor Law Board<sup>78</sup> asking why their correspondence had been publicised the reply stated; "It was done to demonstrate the Poor Law Board's thinking on the matter."<sup>79</sup> The Annual Report in 1850 revealed an apparently similar situation at Upton-on-Severn as; "There are about 30 children (boys and girls) in the school who were not taught to read and write or to understand the nature of figures though (when I visited) some of them were 12 or 14 years old",<sup>80</sup> but this was because the schoolmistress was unable to cope, so she was replaced. The personal opinion of Guardians influenced readiness to create schools in workhouses, because whilst some Guardians agreed with the Poor Law Commission's opinion, regarding the curative nature of education, others were sceptical. Some insisted on maintaining the "Principle of Less Eligibility", but infringing the other major tenet of Poor Law Administration "National Uniformity" in doing so. However, these principles were impossible to maintain. Although Martley's dogged resistance to teaching writing was unique, the opinions expressed were

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77. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. August 1848. "Official Circular", July and August 1848. enclosed. P.R.O. MH12. 14082.

78. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. September 1848. Letter to P.L.B.. P.R.O. MH12. 14082.

79. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes 16th. September 1848. Letter to P.L.B.. P.R.O. MH12. 14082.



probably held by a minority of Guardians in most unions. Vociferous socially influential Guardians with high personal status gathered a caucus of support and only this dominant view was conveyed to the Poor Law Commission. Minority views remained masked. Boards of Guardians invariably represented dominant sectional interests, which was inevitable given the Poor Law electoral system where only substantial ratepayers voted.

Education in Worcestershire workhouses was not provided uniformly in spite of "National Uniformity". What was provided depended on the whim and fancy of the Guardians. By 1836 <sup>81</sup> whilst schooling was theoretically for a minimum of three hours per day this did not always happen. "Reading writing and the principles of the Christian Religion" were taught together with instruction "calculated to train them in the habits of usefulness, industry and virtue." Some unions had been tardy in forming and the Poor Law Commission had not always been effective in promoting education. Only Pershore, Shipston-on-Stour, Stourbridge and Worcester

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80. P.L.B. 2nd. Annual Report. 1850. p.8. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1866.

81. P.L.C. Consolidated Order for the Relief of Town Unions, 5th. February 1836. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 65.

unions operated schools in 1836. <sup>82</sup> When Kidderminster Guardians began to provide education in 1837 there was no schoolroom, <sup>83</sup> although one existed by 1838. <sup>84</sup> Additional furniture was added to it later. Few other unions provided schoolrooms. In 1848 the H.M.I. told the Worcester Guardians that it was "the desire of the Government to secure for the pauper children sound and useful education together, with such moral and industrial training as may prepare them for a course of honest industry and independent livelihood in after life"<sup>85</sup> and; "In some unions the education of pauper children had gained great excellence." <sup>86</sup> The education

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## 82. DATES OF FORMATION OF UNIONS.

The Dates of the first minutes are given in brackets.

Bromsgrove.	8-11-36.	(20-12-36.)
Droitwich.	26-9-36.	(16-11-36.)
Dudley.	15-10-36.	
Evesham.	11-5-36.	(1-6-36.)
Kidderminster.	15-10-36.	(2-12-36.)
King's Norton.	13-12-36.	
Martley.	26-10-36.	(14-10-36)
Pershore.	22-10-35.	(14-11-35.)
Shipston-on-Stour.	20-12-34.	
Stourbridge.	29-11-34.	
Tenbury Wells.	29-8-36.	
Upton-on-Severn.	8-8-34.	(12-12-35.)
Worcester.	30-8-34.	(26-1-37.)

83. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. February 1837. P.R.O. MH12. 14016. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 1.

84. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. June 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14016. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 1.

85. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. February 1848 P.R.O. MH12. 14205.

86. Repeated in P.L.B. 3rd. Annual Report, 1851. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1925.

offered was often superior to that offered to the children of independent labourers". Many long term indoor pauper children were thus "more eligible" regarding education than their non-pauper contemporaries.

### iii. Was Education Necessary?

W.E. Hickson <sup>87</sup> wrote in 1836 that education and training "are absolutely essential to the final extinction of pauperism in this country", but that the education received was "merely nominal".<sup>88</sup> The notion of education as a cure for pauperism was questioned as he regarded it as a preventative measure (for crime as well as pauperism). He suggested it was the Commissioners' responsibility "whether 100,000 children at least, shall be raised to the ranks of moral intelligent beings, or remain all their lives the pariahs of English Society - a burthen and a disgrace to the community". The Newcastle Royal Commission in 1858 agreed with this analysis. <sup>89</sup> Hickson had rejected the idea that "Less Eligibility" prevented pauper children from being supplied with education. He suggested it was only orphaned and deserted children who were found alone in the workhouse. For parents to gain education for their

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87. W.E. Hickson. 1803-70. Son of a boot and shoe manufacturer from London. He retired from business in 1840 to concentrate on philanthropic works. A pioneer of popular education in general, and music education in particular. A strong supporter of National Education.

88. Letter to Poor Law Commissioners, 13th. August 1836.

89. N.R.C., 1861 Op. cit. Part.I. p.384.

child meant making themselves and their family dependent on the parish. This they were reluctant to do, ensuring little abuse of the system. In this circumstance the workhouse was merely an asylum for children and Children's Establishments were essential. The workhouse he said had "a contaminated environment" in which it could not be conceived a child would spend five or ten years. The Poor Law Commissioners themselves agreed with some of Hickson's arguments. Critics elsewhere included a group of "voluntary helpers" such as Louisa Twining. This group came to be regarded as experts on workhouse children and workhouse education and they founded the Workhouse Visiting Society in 1858, which was an offshoot of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science. It operated until 1865 co-ordinating workhouse visiting by laymen (or more particularly laywomen), and published a Journal <sup>90</sup> containing extremely paternalistic articles with a very particular view of the plight of the workhouse child. Elizabeth Twining together with her sister Louisa gave evidence on workhouse education to the Newcastle Royal Commission. Elizabeth asserted that workhouse children were "unfit for any kind of service" at an age when children outside the workhouse were fit for such work. It was said that such children were often returned to the workhouse as unsuitable, because of "a want of life and action a want

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90. Workhouse Visiting Society Journal The only extant copies in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

of internal inspection and visitation by voluntary friends; (the Workhouse Visiting Society?) a want of devoted zeal and love of teachers; a want of family life and care". She also questioned the worth of intellectual education to such children <sup>91</sup> and insisted that she knew the situation of these children.

She doubted the insight of others. Her paternalistic remedy for the workhouse schools was to "make an appointment of a superior class of person" to oversee each school. By 1858 Poor Law Board staff had become more professional and were exhibiting a great deal of skill and expertise in their work. They saw the intervention of the Misses Twining, and the Workhouse Visiting Society, as unhelpful and unwelcome. Assistant Commissioner Sir J. Walsham, for instance, in 1861, saw that Miss Louisa Twining "manifested her repugnance for workhouse establishments" a repugnance that "appears....to pervade and colour all her evidence"<sup>92</sup> which was not supported by facts. As Assistant Poor Law Commissioner R. Weale indicated that there was "conclusive evidence that the statements of Miss Louisa Twining....[and Mr. Patrick Cumin]....so far as my district is concerned are unfounded".<sup>93</sup>

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91. N.R.C., 1861 P.P. (2794-V) XXI, Part.V.

92. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op cit. p.41.

93. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.5.

#### iv. Separation of Children: District and Separate Schools.

The District School idea was discussed by the Select Committee in 1838 when it suggested; "The strict confinement of children in the workhouse would be likely to prove injurious to their health....and if District Schools, to which they shall have presently occasion to allude should be generally established all difficulties on this point would be removed."<sup>94</sup> An Act of Parliament in 1844 <sup>95</sup> allowed separate schools to be formed, but it was frowned upon by the Poor Law Commission because central funding of pauper education was involved.<sup>96</sup> Unions within a fifteen mile radius could combine forming "School Districts" to be funded with up to 20% of the Poor Rates. These schools were expected to contain 800 to 1,000 children and were therefore only viable in the more populous areas. Worcestershire was not populous enough. The industrial school was the type of District School most favoured by the Poor Law Commission, and H.M.I.'s persisted in attempts to get such schools formed. The H.M.I. J.C. Symons wrote a pamphlet strongly supporting such schools in 1848.<sup>97</sup>

At Bromsgrove in the same year there was a vacancy for a schoolmaster, but the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner was ".... not at present disposed to appoint a

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94. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. P.P. (681-1) XVIII. Pt.1. p.33.

95. 7 & 8 Vict. c.101.

96. P.L.C. "Official Circular", 31st January 1844.W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 67.

97. Included in A.P.L.C. A. Doyle's Report. 1848. P.R.O. MH32/17.

schoolmaster and would wish to learn the intentions of the Government regards the establishment of industrial schools before expressing an opinion".<sup>98</sup> The Guardians appointed a schoolmaster, but the H.M.I. revealingly still doubted whether a teacher was essential as the "boys were too young for industrial training".<sup>99</sup> At Pershore in 1851 it was said "the smallness of the numbers make it likely that the children will be removed elsewhere".<sup>100</sup> They were recommended to go to the local National Society School, but not to an industrial school. <sup>101</sup> They commenced there in 1852, <sup>102</sup> coincidental with the death of the workhouse schoolmistress. Assistant Commissioner E. Gulson told the Poor Law Board that there was no District School in the county in 1854. <sup>103</sup> He repeated this in 1855 <sup>104</sup> and in the Annual Report in 1857 <sup>105</sup> he reported no progress

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98. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 28th. February 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 13908. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 4.

99. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 17th. April 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 13908. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 4.

100. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 30th. January 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 5.

101. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 11th. November 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 5.

102. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 16th. March 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 5.

103. A.P.L.C. E. Gulson's Report. 8th. September 1854. P.R.O. MH32/32.

104. A.P.L.C. E. Gulson's Report. 27th. February 1855. Ibid.

105. P.L.B. 9th. Annual Report. 1857. P.R.O. ZHC1. 2385.

in establishing District Schools, but comments <sup>106</sup> by an official at Upton-on-Severn Union may have been pertinent. He suggested that Catholic parents would resist sending their children to such schools, believing that proselytism would occur. At about this time E. Gulson reacted without enthusiasm to the idea of opening such schools to children in receipt of outdoor relief which would have made such schools possible. <sup>107</sup> He saw such an arrangement as potentially causing harm to the inmate child by introducing infections both moral and physical. Perhaps even more importantly, however, it would make the outdoor child more liable to be pauperised in after life. This idea was not mentioned again in the county and the authorities did not proceed with plans for District Schools. However, when in 1857 Kidderminster workhouse school was "overcrowded and unsatisfactory", <sup>108</sup> the H.M.I. blamed the schoolmistress, who was charged with neglect. He then again attempted to promote a District School. He suggested the removal of all children under 5 years old into an infant school, so that the existing school could be transformed into an industrial school. <sup>109</sup> The Guardians blamed the

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106. OBERMANN, S.P. "The Education of Children in Poor Law Institutions in England and Wales during the Period 1834 to 1870", Ph.D. Queen's University, Belfast, 1982. p.71.

107. A.P.L.C. E. Gulson's Report, 1855. Op cit.

108. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. May 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 14021. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 11.

109. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. February 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14022. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 11.



schoolmistress for the inadequacies and she resigned in spite of support from a small group of Guardians. A separate school was not adopted, however.

The Poor Law Board after 1847 remained preoccupied with the endemic nature of pauperism and the effects of association with adult paupers. In 1849 two-thirds of workhouses were defective because of this. Pressure for complete separation developed as the size of the child indoor pauper population grew. Separate individual workhouse schools were suggested, but Coode stated that he would "be much more inclined to recommend separate establishments for this degraded class (able-bodied adults) than I should separate establishments for children".<sup>110</sup> He suggested the logical approach of removing the cause of the contamination, in the 1850's, but it was not investigated. In 1858 the Newcastle Royal Commission commented unfavourably on the standard of education in workhouse schools, thus bringing further pressure for separate schools.<sup>111</sup> Nassau Senior insisted that separate institutions for children were essential, although Worcestershire Guardians, like most rural Guardians resisted the idea on financial grounds. It would militate against "Less Eligibility".

A pauper child was regarded as an unworthy individual

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110. Coode was Assistant Secretary to the P.L.C., 1834 to 1848.

111. N.R.C. (1861) Op. cit. Vol.I. p.384.

and the Webbs expressed this well in describing pauper children as having "small social value".<sup>112</sup> Separate children's institutions were of low priority for Guardians, but they were of high priority for the Central Authority. By 1861 it was stated; "Although some difficulties may occasionally arise in the management of separate establishments for children their maintenance and education in schools removed from the association of the workhouse are so manifestly advantageous, that it appears highly desirable to promote the foundation of such schools in all practicable cases". But Coode believed these recommendations would "take away from the Guardians, who represented the ratepayers, their right to determine whether a certain enormous expenditure shall or shall not be incurred", which was "virtual despotism".<sup>113</sup>

He had calculated the cost of such a scheme to be £10,357,960 and was very critical of the idea, believing that a "very lofty standard....completely inapplicable to the condition of life of very poor children" had been used in assessing the workhouse schools. The expectations about the separation of children he also regarded as unrealistic, as the children were not as liable to contact evil in the workhouse "as it would be

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112. WEBB, S & B. English Poor Law History Part II, Vol.I, Longman Green, 1929. p.114.

113. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.9.

if they were at large in their own homes"<sup>114</sup> and "They were not subjected to the same amount of moral contamination as the poor generally."<sup>115</sup> He thought that the Privy Council Committee on Education's expectations of elementary education were too high. He continued that the Guardians "are willing to provide for such a humble plain education as fits them to serve in their locality, but have no inclination to educate paupers' children so much above their own."<sup>116</sup>

The education offered in rural workhouses was "exceeding in solid useful plain excellence that of the average school under the control of the Privy Council."<sup>117</sup> Assistant Poor Law Commissioner E. Gulson agreed with this. He applauded the Poor Law Board's decision, in 1863, not to "coerce Guardians"<sup>118</sup> suggesting that the improvement in workhouse schools had been underrated and the superiority of other schools exaggerated. He also reacted to the "palliatives" recommended by the Privy Council Committee on Education following the Newcastle Royal Commission. He referred in particular to the "Revised Code" which he saw as inappropriate to the needs of the workhouse school.

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114. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.7.

115. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.9.

116. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.8.

117. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.9.

118. A.P.L.C. E. Gulson's Report. 9-7-63. P.R.O. MH32/33.

In 1866 an Act of Parliament allowed "the cost of sending and keeping a child at [District] schools"<sup>119</sup> to be paid, providing costs were no greater than a workhouse school. A questionnaire was issued by the Poor Law Board in 1866. It asked:

"1. Whether in the event of a school for girls being established in the county under the Act on the principles and under management of which they could approve they will be likely to send occasionally suitable girls from their workhouse lists.

2. About how many in the course of a year they might send.

3. The actual cost as charged to the parish of a girl in your workhouse".<sup>120</sup>

Kidderminster Union replied stating "this Board believes that the female children in the workhouse....receive therein a sufficiently moral, religious, industrial and useful education from the schoolmistress".<sup>121</sup> Sixty-one girls had left the workhouse (aged two to sixteen years) between June 1863 and January 1865 "to situations of various kinds". Only one had returned to the workhouse. Thus whilst the Guardians approved of the principle of a District School as outlined they

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119. 25 & 26 Vict. c.43.

120. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, Received. 13th. March 1866. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 17.

121. Ibid.

could not pledge themselves to use such a school. <sup>122</sup> The idea of a District School was rejected by all county unions. In 1849 Kidderminster attempted to persuade Bridgnorth Union to take orphan boys into Quatt Industrial School. <sup>123</sup> Droitwich Guardians made a similar approach in 1850. <sup>124</sup> Both were refused, but Stourbridge Guardians were successful. In 1862 <sup>125</sup> there were thirty two orphan boys from that union at Quatt, although the number fell as boys gained employment. The agreement was not renewed beyond 1866. <sup>126</sup> Non-orphan boys were kept at the Workhouse.

The Assistant Poor Law Commissioners generally condemned the Newcastle Royal Commission Report which promoted

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122. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. March 1866, *ibid*, gave details of the girls who; "Left the workhouse 1st. June 1863 to 1st. January 1866.

12 to 16 years.	17.
8 to 12 years.	25.
2 to 8 years.	19

TOTAL.	61.
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Returned:

Emily Mercer	13 - Very delicate.
Sarah Ann Howell	11 - Deserted.
Maria Howell	6 - Deserted.
Agnes Potter	10 - Returned with mother".

123. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. December 1849. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 8.

124. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 2nd. December 1850. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 4. P.R.O. MH12. 13934.

125. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 9-5-62. P.R.O. MH12. 14143.

126. There were 30 boys from Stourbridge there in 1863, (17-4-63) 16 in 1864 (16-12-64) and 18 in 1865. (26-6-65) By 1866 (2-3-66) there was no mention of boys from Stourbridge at Quatt.

the idea of separate schools. W.H.T. Hawley described its conclusions as "ignorant of and indifferent to the evidence of the Poor Law Board" and "....rejecting the testimony of practical and influential witnesses." <sup>127</sup> The evidence of these "partial" witnesses meant that; "Parliament is called upon to suppress all existing workhouse schools, as being nurseries of crime and vice, and to substitute for them an enormously expensive system of centralised compulsory education." He believed that education in workhouses provided a "quality of mental instruction....[of]....too high a standard for the condition of life of the children to whom it applied." This made the "children of quicker intellect....aspire to a position of life far beyond the sphere in which their lot is cast."<sup>128</sup> Those of lesser ability "forgot all with which they have been crammed as soon as they quit school." Sir J. Walsham another Assistant Commissioner had favoured district schools in 1846 because "the workhouse schools were more or less open to adverse criticism, but he changed his mind and came to support individual workhouse schools."<sup>129</sup> He stated in 1861 "I dissent entirely from that sweeping condemnation of the moral and intellectual results effected by the workhouse schools"<sup>130</sup> made by the

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127. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.33.

128. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.22.

129. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.39.

130. Ibid.

Newcastle Royal Commission whose tone had been "partial" and its range of evidence "limited".

A. Doyle, another of the Assistant Commissioners, agreed stating that "the inquiry as conducted....was unfairly restricted; that the evidence invited was partial; [and] that the evidence is not even impartially presented in the report"<sup>131</sup> and "[the] attempt was not even made to ascertain the facts one way or the other."<sup>132</sup> He was not satisfied with the "evidence" or the way it was dealt with in the Newcastle Royal Commission Report. It had resurrected old evidence, for instance a letter from the economist Nassau Senior written in 1850 from which "large passages were omitted."<sup>133</sup> A letter to E.C. Tufnell, one of the Poor Law Commissioners, in 1851 from an ex-workhouse inmate was also cited, but in A. Doyle's opinion this was because of "a lack of better evidence."<sup>134</sup> The Newcastle Royal Commission's purpose was to discredit the workhouse schools. T.B. Browne, the H.M.I. for workhouse schools, summed up the officials' opinion in his evidence to the Select Committee in 1861. He said; "I have long felt that good schools are quite practicable in well managed workhouses....and there is no doubt that many children have left such schools, who

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131. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.52.

132. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.68.

133. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. pp.68-9.

134. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. pp.69-70.

have turned out well."<sup>135</sup> The whole tenor of their (the Newcastle Royal Commissions') questioning, their choice of witnesses, their responses and the style of their final report suggested that neutralising the contamination of pauper children by adult mendicants was impossible. Separate schools were the only possible solution providing better education for less expenditure. E.C. Tufnell in 1862 <sup>136</sup> claimed a cost of £2-13-2 per annum for maintaining a child in a District School, but a figure of £23-18-6 per annum was given in 1857. There remained strong support for such schools no matter what the cost, but H.M.I. T.B. Browne disagreed consistently whilst supporting the individual workhouse schools. He thought that if these were efficiently administered they were satisfactory, being more able to prepare the pauper child for employment than the District School. Obtaining employment at the earliest moment was most important. The workhouse schools gained favour with the H.M.I. for the area, T.B. Browne, and this explained why separate schools were not adopted in Worcestershire.

After 1847 the Poor Law Board demanded to know the child's classification in more detail. A more accurate picture of the extent of the child pauper problem resulted, but the Central Authority appeared unwilling

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135. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.71.

136. P.C.C.E. Report, 1862. P.P. (3171) XLVII, pp.336-7.



or unable to act to alleviate it. In spite of the rejection of separate schools, emphasis on the idea continued. The Guardians at Worcester in 1848 were advised to control the "constant intercourse between the children and the grown up paupers of both sexes."<sup>137</sup> A District School was again demanded by the Poor Law Board.

In the Annual Report in 1850 <sup>138</sup> Temple, Principal of Kneller Hall Training School, stated that the boys would "never be depauperised; they mix with the men most of them gaol birds."<sup>139</sup> In 1858 the Newcastle Royal Commission concluded that education in the workhouse was impossible because "the influence of the workhouse is itself pernicious and because proper leaders cannot be induced to take charge of the schools."<sup>140</sup> Cumin told the Newcastle Royal Commission that "children [were] most inefficiently trained, but actually nurtured in vice and that a large proportion of them turn out thieves, or prostitutes, or paupers, or something of that sort."<sup>141</sup> At about this time Evesham workhouse was described as "barely adequate because of communication"<sup>142</sup> between children and adult paupers and

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137. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. February 1848. Op cit.

138. P.L.B. 3rd. Annual Report, 1851. P.R.O. ZHC1. 1925.

139. P.C.C.E. Minutes, 1852. p.6.

140. N.R.C., 1861 Op. cit. Part.I. pp.364-5.

141. N.R.C., 1861 Part.III. P.P. (2794-III) XXI. pp.38-41,

142. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 22nd. February 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14001.

at Shipston-on-Stour in 1862 the workhouse was said to be "ill arranged, and the children are not completely separated from the adult inmates, with whom I believe they work."<sup>143</sup> R. Weale, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner considered, however, that contact with other children rather than contact with adults was the major danger. He cited an example where a prostitute of "almost incredible juvenility....[was]....admitted to a workhouse school and permitted to associate with the other children." <sup>144</sup> This was done unconsciously, but the dangers were obvious.

H.M.I. T.B. Browne a proponent of schools within workhouses expressed a contrary opinion believing that "they may even have less evil....in the workhouse....than falls their lot in the daily walk to a National school or a British School through the streets of a populous town."<sup>145</sup> Assistant Commissioners H.G. Bowyer and A. Doyle, both supporters of separate schools in the 1840's, began to express contrary opinions at the end of the 1860's. They felt that the threat of the general workhouse had been overstated. <sup>146</sup> The child may have been in greater danger in its environment outside

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143. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 12th. May 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 14122.

144. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op cit. p.5.

145. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op cit. p.72. Citing P.C.C.E. Minutes, 1857-8, p.156.

146. H.G. Bowyer, letter to P.L.B. 31st. January 1867, P.R.O. MH32/108. A. Doyle cited by OBERMANN, Op cit. p.237.

the workhouse. Contemporaneously opinion was that the District School should give a more suitable education avoiding what Assistant Commissioner Henley reported to the Newcastle Royal Commission in 1861, <sup>147</sup> that 22.9% of males and 39.5% of females educated in workhouses in Worcestershire when sent to service were returned, probably because of the unsuitability of the employment found for them. However, when children eventually left the workhouse at the age of 16 they generally did not return. J.T. Graves cited statistics for the the various unions of Worcestershire to illustrate this. <sup>148</sup> Only at Martley had more than 5% of the workhouse inmates spent at least part of their childhood in workhouse schools.

#### **v. Pedagogy.**

A good schoolteacher had a beneficial influence. In 1853 at Droitwich; "The elder children are already improving and I expect will make some further advance this year under Miss Smith who has excellent methods of imparting knowledge and I think will train the children morally and industrially and exercises a kindly influence over them".<sup>149</sup> Miss Smith impressed both the H.M.I. and the Guardians, but not the inmates because when the H.M.I. inspected the school later he "felt it right to mention that I am told....that several female inmates....told

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147. N.R.C., 1861. Part.III. Op. cit. p.8.

148. J.T. Graves Report. 10-11-51. P.R.O. MH32/33.

149. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 18th. May 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 13935. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 6.

the children to answer none of my questions in order that the schoolmistress might therefore be dismissed".<sup>150</sup> Communication was shown to be possible between the inmate adults and children at Droitwich, but the H.M.I. "imputed no blame (for this situation) to the officers". He begged "to earnestly call the attention of the Board of Guardians to this grave injury to the children and injustice to the schoolmistress". He could not make an objective assessment, but he was critical of "a deficiency in practical usefulness" on his next visit.<sup>151</sup> He insisted that some allowance be made for the "youth of the children and the interruption of their attendance". Separation was at fault again in 1857.<sup>152</sup> The H.M.I. complained that girls were allowed to nurse patients in the female adult wards, seriously infringing segregation. Assistant Commissioner W.H.T. Hawley made this point in 1861 when he described moves "to relax....classification, and to permit them [the girls] to be employed as nurses in the sick wards, and take charge of the infants of able bodied-women".<sup>153</sup> He commented "I have not encouraged it" in spite of a Regulation allowing this.

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150. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 9th. November 1853. H.M.I.'s Report. P.R.O. MH12. 13935. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 6.

151. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 18th. October 1854. H.M.I.'s Report. P.R.O. MH12. 13935. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 6.

152. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 7th. January 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 7.

153. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op cit. p.34.

In schools attached to workhouses well qualified staff able to improve discipline and moral training were required, but parsimony led some unions to continue to use the services of the porter, the matron or a pauper as schoolmaster or schoolmistress. In 1838 <sup>154</sup> it was suggested that Guardians sometimes appointed people known to them rather than better qualified applicants from further afield. Assistant Commissioner E. Gulson agreed that this had happened, but he saw the low salary offered as normally preventing "fit and proper persons" applying. The advantage of employing paupers as schoolteachers was that they were removed from the relief lists thus saving money. In 1842 the Poor Law Commission legitimated this practice, restating; "A schoolmaster or schoolmistress need only be appointed if the Guardians think fit",<sup>155</sup> although the post could still be filled by a pauper with no qualification. A two-tier Poor Law Administrative structure was created in an attempt to promote education in workhouse schools. Such provision was dependent on retrospective decisions of auditors, however, and was thus problematical. Local financing of the Poor Law led to parsimony, causing the Poor Law Commission to sometimes fail in getting its policies implemented. Persuasion and cajoling of some unions was necessary, although only rarely did

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154. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. Op. cit. 3rd. Report. Question 985.

155. P.L.C. Instructional Letter. 5-3-42. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par.

intransigent unions resist introducing education for long. Education policy was applied flexibly, because if it had been applied inflexibly insuperable problems would have resulted. Locally elected and accountable Guardians cognisant of the local situation implemented the policy. In most cases the system worked reasonably well and administrative problems diminished between 1834 and 1871.

The school staff's efficiency at Kidderminster was carefully monitored by the Guardians <sup>156</sup> because the plan on which the school was run was considered important. The Poor Law Commission enquired in 1838 <sup>157</sup> whether the "National System of Education" was in use in the workhouses. By 1840 <sup>158</sup> Kidderminster required its schoolmistress to be acquainted with that system and the chaplain assessed her efficiency in that respect. He assured the Guardians she was efficient, <sup>159</sup> but the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner was not satisfied particularly with the way she taught writing <sup>160</sup> because

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156. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. November 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

157. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, (Includes P.L.C. Return.) 4th. July 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

158. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. January 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

159. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 16th. June 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

160. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. July 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

of a lack of slates. The Guardians had converted a stable into a schoolroom so that "the National System of Education of the children can be fully carried out". A new schoolroom was commissioned in 1840 to allow this to be done. <sup>161</sup> A dozen oak boards were purchased on which the lessons were pasted (indicative of the national system), but there continued to be a "great difficulty" in finding efficient teachers as "there was no place to look for a master or mistress who could give the children a good course of instruction". <sup>162</sup>

A training school for such teachers from which "the Guardians should be forced to go to such an institution to find such teachers" was suggested, but not immediately proceeded with. <sup>163</sup> In 1850 King's Norton asked that a copy of their advertisement for a schoolmistress be sent to "each lady principal of [the] training institutions at Whitelands, Salisbury and Exeter". <sup>164</sup> Worcester Union recruited a schoolmaster

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161. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. July 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 3.

162. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1837-8. Op cit. Question 983.

163. Pressure for a training institution specifically for workhouse schoolmasters led to the founding of Kneller Hall Training School in 1852. In spite of the massive support for the training school idea and the appointment of Temple as its prestigious first Principal, the venture failed. The teachers trained at Kneller Hall did not generally go into workhouse schools, which were unattractive to them. Kneller Hall Training School closed in 1857.

164. KING'S NORTON GUARDIANS, Minutes. 3rd. January 1850. Copy of advertisement sent to National Society. P.R.O. MH12. 14041. B.P.L. Fl.

from Kneller Hall in 1853, <sup>165</sup> recommended by the Principal the Rev. F. Temple, and the Guardians were very pleased with this appointment, but within a week the schoolmaster resigned. Temple apologised "for the annoyance that has been caused by my recommendation of Mr. Prellin, and his subsequent conduct in quitting his situation on grounds which in my opinion were quite insufficient." Prellin was told by Temple that he would not be recommended again. In 1858 <sup>166</sup> Kidderminster Guardians advertised unsuccessfully for school staff in "The National Society Monthly." Trained teachers were still unusual. The schoolmistress at King's Norton in 1850 <sup>167</sup> asked if her fees would be paid for her to attend training school, but the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner refused, although the Poor Law Board did offer her 3 months leave of absence, if she paid for her own training. Apparently they considered 3 months training to be sufficient for a schoolmistress, which was not unusual outside the workhouse schooling system.

#### **vii. School Accommodation.**

The Poor Law Commission grew in size and complexity as more permanent central office staff were appointed. Locally the numbers of workhouse staff also increased.

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165. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. September 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14207.

166. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. September 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14022. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 12.

167. KING'S NORTON GUARDIANS, Minutes. 16th. January 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 14042. B.P.L. Fl.



The Assistant Poor Law Commissioner at the interface between the central and local administration was aware that pauper education was most effective where suitable facilities existed. The Central Authority sought to promote the provision of such facilities and Chadwick in the 1840's referred to discipline being "to a considerable extent dependent on convenient schoolrooms" and the way in which they were arranged and organised. Some schoolrooms in the county were inadequate and problems persisted. For instance at Kidderminster in 1848 the schoolroom was criticised because it was impossible "to give such directions....for accustoming the children to habits of industry".<sup>168</sup> The chapel was clearly unsuited for the purpose and its use caused "desecration".

The general workhouse accommodation was also criticised in 1848 <sup>169</sup>, but nothing was done. The Guardians said they were "bound to exercise great care in the expenditure of money, as District Schools may be created in the area", although no such school was created. This appeared to be a convenient excuse. At Worcester in 1850 <sup>170</sup> there was criticism of the schoolroom and the

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168. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. November 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 7.

169. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. December 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 7.

170. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. June 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 14206.

Guardians suggested a new one, but the Poor Law Board were not satisfied with the site suggested. They regarded the site as too close to the burial ground and they suggested a new and entirely separate school. <sup>171</sup> The Guardians would not finance such a school. A year later <sup>172</sup> the classroom was said to be accessible from many parts of the workhouse enabling schoolchildren to contact adult paupers, but no change was made to prevent this. At Upton-on-Severn in 1853 <sup>173</sup> there was criticism of the schoolroom, but the Guardians congratulated themselves <sup>174</sup> that their schoolroom was "sufficiently large, well ventilated and freshly whitewashed", but Assistant Poor Law Commissioner J.T. Graves disagreed asking the size of the schoolroom. <sup>175</sup> The Guardians' reply <sup>176</sup> caused J.T. Graves to apologise as the schoolroom was of adequate size, but he had been unaware that only half of the children occupied the room at any one time.

Adequacy of schoolrooms obviously depended on the number

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171. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. June 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 14206.

172. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. January 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14206.

173. UPTON-ON-SEVERN GUARDIANS, Minutes. 25th. November 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14185. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 6.

174. UPTON-ON-SEVERN GUARDIANS, Minutes. 2nd. December 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14185. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 6.

175. UPTON-ON-SEVERN GUARDIANS, Minutes. 17th. December 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14185. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 6.

176. Ibid. They answered 18'8"x15'x8'8".

of children resident in the workhouse. Schoolrooms were inadequate in winter when the workhouse was full, but adequate in the summer months with fewer children. Expenditure on a new schoolroom used for the four or five winter months was considered extravagant and was not a priority with Guardians. School staff were expected to cope. Shipston-on-Stour in 1861 <sup>177</sup> and Evesham in 1864 <sup>178</sup> were similarly criticised. When a new schoolroom was demanded at Evesham in 1865 <sup>179</sup> the existing schoolroom was enlarged. At Bromsgrove in 1868 the H.M.I. stated; "I find the numbers much increased and the schoolroom rather crowded, and it must have been quite insufficient for attendance in the winter....[he was]....quite sure that the schoolmistress has done all that is in her power in the crowded state of the school".<sup>180</sup> Replacement of a schoolroom was sometimes unavoidable. At King's Norton in 1850 <sup>181</sup> a loan of £600 was raised to build a new schoolroom. At Stourbridge in 1868 <sup>182</sup> a loan of £1500 was raised when the state of the schoolroom was blamed for the

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177. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 27th. May 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 14121.

178. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 5th. December 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 14002.

179. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 24th. July 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14002.

180. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 28th. June 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 13913. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

181. KING'S NORTON GUARDIANS, Minutes. 10th. May 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 14041. B.P.L. Fl.

182. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 31st. July 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14144.

threatened resignation of the schoolmistress, as her health had suffered because of "the closeness of the schoolroom which is barely sufficient in size".<sup>183</sup> In an attempt to retain her services the Guardians decided to build a new schoolroom,<sup>184</sup> but it was too late to retain the schoolmistress in her post.<sup>185</sup> The schoolroom was "in use" in 1871.<sup>186</sup> A new schoolroom was also built at Bromsgrove in 1869.<sup>187</sup>

Sometimes the lighting of the schoolroom was a problem. At Shipston-on-Stour in 1869 the H.M.I. stated; "It would be a material improvement if the schoolroom was made light". A new schoolroom was considered.<sup>188</sup> In 1871 the H.M.I. criticised the schoolroom again stating; "It is very low and narrow and not properly constructed for a schoolroom and also too small considering the number of children receiving instruction in it".<sup>189</sup> The Guardians wrote to the Poor Law Board asking what size the schoolroom should be to accommodate

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183. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 17th. July 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14144.

184. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 15th. October 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14144.

185. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 22nd. March 1869. She resigned. P.R.O. MH12. 14144.

186. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 27th. February 1871. P.R.O. MH12. 14145.

187. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 10th. August 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 13913. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

188. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 5th. November 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 14124.

189. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 11th. April 1871. H.M.I.'s Report. P.R.O. MH12. 14124.

eighty children. <sup>190</sup> The Poor Law Board stated <sup>191</sup> "25'x18'x12'" adding that a grant would be available. This was less than required by the National Society at this date if a schoolroom was to receive a building grant.

Elsewhere the schoolroom was said to be injurious to the health of the children. At Kidderminster in 1860 the schoolroom was said to be "ill constructed and ill ventilated as to cause sickness amongst the children who occupied it".<sup>192</sup> These schoolrooms were reroofed in 1862 <sup>193</sup>, but in 1865 the roofs were said to "generate heat"<sup>194</sup> which was also "unhealthy". Equipment in schoolrooms was sometimes at fault. At Stourbridge in 1852 "the books and apparatus in use in the school, as well as the desks and furniture are imperfect".<sup>195</sup> The Guardians refurnished the room. <sup>196</sup> The H.M.I. made favourable comment on this. To resolve shortages of

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190. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 24th. April 1871. P.R.O. MH12. 14124.

191. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 3rd. August 1871. P.L.B. letter to Guardians. P.R.O. MH12. 14124.

192. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 21st August 1860 and 11th. September 1860. P.R.O. MH12. 14022. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 13.

193. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, Boys 12th. August 1862, Girls 2nd. September 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 15.

194. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 3rd. October 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 17.

195. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 2nd. June 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14139.

196. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 11th. September 1852. H.M.I.'s Report. P.R.O. MH12. 14143.

space other rooms were converted, as at Droitwich in 1848, <sup>197</sup> where the detached vagrants' wards were converted into day rooms (one for boys and one for girls). Further additional space was provided in a shed in the girls' yard, which had already been done at Pershore in 1839. <sup>198</sup> At King's Norton in 1868 <sup>199</sup> the woman tramps' ward was converted to accommodate children during the day time. The provision of adequate accommodation for children continued to be a problem.

Developments in elementary schools outside the workhouses were adopted in workhouse schools. For instance, the gallery common in elementary school classrooms was adopted in some workhouse schools. In 1848 <sup>200</sup> at Worcester the teacher's suggestion of a gallery was supported by the H.M.I. <sup>201</sup> It was sanctioned immediately and was successful. In 1852 the H.M.I. decided a gallery was "desirable in the girls' schoolroom, though it is not I think quite as desirable as in the boys' school. No doubt they will provide one".<sup>202</sup> A gallery was provided there. In 1863

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197. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 19th. July 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 13933. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 4.

198. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. August 1839. Op cit.

199. KING'S NORTON GUARDIANS, Minutes. 14th. October 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14045. B.P.L. Fl.

200. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. February 1848. Op cit.

201. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. February 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 14205.

202. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 11th. October 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14207.

Kidderminster had a gallery and desks were added at a cost of £6-5-0, <sup>203</sup> but other workhouse schools lacked basic equipment such as blackboards. At Kidderminster in 1840 <sup>204</sup> there were no slates in the whole school and as such equipment was crucial in the teaching of writing this was a vital criticism. In spite of such cases Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Hall <sup>205</sup> stated in his verbal evidence to the Newcastle Royal Commission in 1861 that some unions were extravagant in their expenditure on workhouse education, but Worcestershire Unions could certainly not be accused of such extravagance.

### **xiii. Education and "Less Eligibility".**

Droitwich union in 1848 <sup>206</sup> attempted to influence the Poor Law Board regarding "Less Eligibility". Sir J.S. Pakington <sup>207</sup> a founder member of the Board of Guardians attempted to use his influence to convey their opinion that; "The education....afforded to the children in the

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203. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, Sanctioned, 7th. April 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14023, W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 15.

204. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. July 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 14203.

205. N.R.C. 1861. P.P. (2794-IV) XXI. Part.IV. Q.3213.

206. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 19th. July 1848. Op cit.

207. Sir. J.S. Pakington. 1799-1880. Born at Powick, Worcestershire. Lived at Westwood Park, near Droitwich. Educated at Eton and Oriel College, Oxford, but he did not graduate. A founder member of Droitwich Board of Guardians. Conservative M.P. for Droitwich, 1837-74. Privy Council 1852. Introduced Education Bills 1855 and 1857. Instrumental in setting up the Newcastle Royal Commission.

workhouse is sufficient for children in their situation in life and that it is more ample than the education which the children of the independent labourer receives". The independent labourer could neither afford education for his child nor forego the wages of the child being educated, yet in spite of this the Privy Council Committee on Education disagreed. In 1852 208 they described the instruction given in workhouse schools as of "the most meagre kind". The Webbs 209 described how during this period "the workhouse schools continued to improve very slowly in educational efficiency", but they did not say how this efficiency was measured. Before 1863 workhouse schools were the responsibility of the Privy Council Committee on Education, and rules applied to elementary schools were also applied to workhouse schools. For instance an attendance register had been kept after 1850. 210 Assistant Commissioner Cumin reported to the Newcastle Royal Commission 211 that regularity of attendance and the length of time spent at school "readily accounted for the improved knowledge of the workhouse child". Inevitably workhouse children attended school more regularly than their contemporaries outside the

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208. P.C.C.E. Minutes 1852-3. Op. cit. N.R.C., 1861 Part I. p.354.

209. WEBB, English Poor Law Policy, Longman Green, 1929, p.113.

210. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. July 1850. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

211. N.R.C., 1861 Op cit. Part III. p.38.



workhouse. J.C. Symons, <sup>212</sup> H.M.I. for workhouse schools, visited schools in Worcestershire and other H.M.I.'s made occasional visits. Inspection was instituted in the 1840's and Sir William Joliffe, one of the first inspectors, told the Select Committee in 1861; "I received my appointment and Mr. E.C. Tufnell commenced about six months before I did".<sup>213</sup> Before that "the schools were not under regular and constant inspection".<sup>214</sup>

#### ix. Inspection.

The relationship between the Poor Law Board and the Privy Council Committee on Education became fraught in the 1850's when the H.M.I. of workhouse schools had more power than his contemporary responsible for elementary schools. <sup>215</sup> This power could be misused and in 1855 Assistant Poor Law Commissioner E. Gulson commented that the Poor Law Board must "possess and continue to possess the superior control of the arrangement of education in workhouses". He regarded "the education of pauper children as....but one portion of Poor Law

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212. Jellinger C. Symons. 1809-60. b. At West Ilsley, Berkshire. Father moved to Monkland, Herefordshire as vicar. Educated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. (B.A.) Commissioner on hand loom weavers, and miners, 1846. Appointed H.M.I. for workhouse schools in February 1848. Wrote, amongst other books, A Plea for Schools, (1847) Tactics of the Times, as regards the Condition and the Treatment of the Dangerous Class, (1849) and chool Economy. (1852)

213. S.C. on Poor Relief, 1861-2, P.P. (474-1) X. 4th. Report. Q.12502. p.56.

214. S.C. on Poor Relief, 1861-2. Op cit. 4th. Report. Q.12503.

215. DIGBY, Op cit. p.188.

Economy....[which]....ought to be treated in connection with the general policy of Poor Law Administration...." He linked this to the duality of inspection by Assistant Poor Law Commissioners and H.M.I.'s - but he accused the H.M.I.'s of directing their word "exclusively, or nearly so to the improvement of education in the workhouses". Their plans were "not always....subordinated to the economy and peculiarities of workhouse administration". He wanted H.M.I.'s to be prevented from directly communicating ideas to Guardians before they had discussed them with the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners because he considered such comments tended "to impair the superior control of the Poor Law Board".<sup>216</sup> Inspection was transferred to the Poor Law Board in 1863. <sup>217</sup>

Five Privy Council Committee on Education Inspectors were transferred to the Poor Law Board in a successful attempt to ensure continuity, following a report from the Privy Council Committee which followed the Newcastle Royal Commission. <sup>218</sup> The Webbs commented that H.M.I.'s "criticisms [were] all in favour of large District Schools as compared with the single union schools". This was an overstatement, however, as H.M.I. T.B. Browne,

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216. A.P.L.C. E. Gulson's Report, 12th. September 1855. P.R.O. MH32/32.

217. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, Reported 8th. September 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 16.

218. P.C.C.E. Memorandum included in E. Gulson's Report, 9th. February 1863. MH32/33

J.C. Symons successor, supported individual schools and expressed satisfaction with the state of education in his district. He had "reason to believe that pauper children generally become emancipated from pauperism when they leave school", but he did regret that; "In the workhouse school, as in other schools, the children are often not allowed to remain a sufficient time to receive proper instruction". Some Guardians he considered too ready "to remove children from school and place them at profitable work". The teacher, he emphasised, was important and thus efficient teachers should be encouraged to stay in the workhouse school system. He saw changes of teacher as detrimental and suggested that an annual vacation for workhouse teachers would make posts more attractive. He believed that; "Some respite from school work is good for both teachers and children and they are likely to work afterwards the better in consequence". However, the workhouse continued to be considered no place for children, because it inflicted great damage on them and because the Master of the Workhouse was considered an unsuitable person to control them. Increasingly, however, the Poor Law Board professionals, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners and the H.M.I.'s, disagreed with these beliefs about the effects of the workhouse schools. The number of children in most workhouses was small, in some cases less than ten, and this prevented an attractive salary being offered to trained and talented teachers, but H.M.I.

T.B. Browne asserted "there are many schools in this district [including Worcestershire] of a very creditable character where the children are as well managed and taught as can reasonably be expected". The Worcester workhouse school he thought was a good school, although this was his only example within the county.<sup>219</sup>

The reports of H.M.I.'s referred to the inadequacy of the curriculum. The 3R's were considered most inadequately taught of all. When the inspectors asked the pupils questions they found that pupils did not understand what they were learning. At Shipston-on-Stour in 1847 <sup>220</sup> where spelling was taught by copying, the schoolmistress was criticised for the state of the copies she gave the children. The H.M.I. reported; "One of these was the word FACENATE [intended I suppose for FASCINATE]". The H.M.I. was not impressed, but the chaplain passed a favourable comment. There were six serious complaints made about the spelling of schoolmistresses in the county between 1834 and 1871, but only two against schoolmasters. Details of misspellings by the schoolmistress at Stourbridge were given in 1853. The H.M.I. reported in "spelling from dictation PRETENTION, PHYSICIAN, SOPHISM, APPORTION, PETITION, OPOSUM and POSSESSION were mis-spelt, and

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219. WEBB, English Poor Law Policy Op cit. p.114.

220. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 20th. March 1847. H.M.I.'s Report. P.R.O. MH12. 14118.

written in the exam paper OCCURRED, MANUFACTORY and MANUFACTORY'S were mis-spelt". Books were recommended to improve the teaching of spelling. At Worcester in 1861<sup>221</sup> in spite of a tolerable performance the H.M.I. was to state; "The [schoolchildren] are deficient in spelling and required to be closely questioned on the subject matter of their lessons".<sup>222</sup>

Only at Droitwich in 1856<sup>223</sup> was spelling commended. Criticism was made about spelling at Bromsgrove as late as 1870. Assistant Commissioner Fraser described the education offered in the workhouse as "not ambitious in its range, but thoroughly sound of its kind, and the writing was good".<sup>224</sup> Writing was usually related to penmanship and meant calligraphy. At Shipston-on-Stour in 1847<sup>225</sup> writing was criticised, but otherwise it appeared well taught and at Droitwich in 1861<sup>226</sup> the importance of the schoolteacher as a model in using copybooks was considered most important. Reading was sometimes criticised as at Stourbridge in 1864 where

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221. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 18th. May 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14140.

222. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. March 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 14209.

223. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 21st. May 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 7.

224. N.R.C., 1861, Coode's Evidence. Referred to by A.P.L.C. R. Weale in his evidence to S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.8.

225. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 20th. March 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14118.

226. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 29th. November 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 9.

the children "read too slowly and monotonously....[and they]....do not understand the words in their books, that they are in the habit of using themselves and hearing".<sup>227</sup> H.M.I.'s and Assistant Commissioners were generally sympathetic. They regarded the teacher's task as difficult. For instance at Bromsgrove in 1867 deficiencies in reading, writing and arithmetic were "accounted for by the fact of their [the children] being recently admitted, or naturally dull".<sup>228</sup> Arithmetic was also often criticised because basic concepts were not understood by the teachers and in some cases the teachers were incapable of teaching the subject. For this reason no arithmetic was taught at Upton-on-Severn in 1847 <sup>229</sup> and at Stourbridge in 1853. <sup>230</sup> Such reports led to it being described as the most deficient of all subjects and the schoolmaster at Stourbridge was severely criticised because hints he had been given on a previous visit had been ignored. The arithmetic at the girls' school there was not satisfactory either as; "Even in orderly and elementary theory....they were wholly deficient", but no improvement occurred and the H.M.I. reported in a marginal comment in 1859; "The

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227. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 17th. April 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 14143.

228. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 16th. July 1867. P.R.O. MH12. 13913. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

229. UPTON-ON-SEVERN GUARDIANS, Minutes. 10th. April 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14183. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 4.

230. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 18th. May 1853. Op cit.

girls could not write even a simple addition sum".<sup>231</sup> The schoolmistress resigned. At Droitwich in 1861 the arithmetic was "backward",<sup>232</sup> but at Shipston-on-Stour in 1847 a more specific criticism had been made as; "None have got further than subtraction, and few could do subtraction sums - They are also imperfect in tables".<sup>233</sup> Sometimes teachers were praised as at Droitwich in 1856<sup>234</sup> and at Evesham in 1859 where the male teacher's "most effective teaching of singing"<sup>235</sup> was commented on. Geography was said to be taught well at Shipston-on-Stour in 1859<sup>236</sup> and drill and singing were well taught at Evesham in 1864.<sup>237</sup> Drill was considered desirable at Droitwich in 1866<sup>238</sup> to instil discipline into the boys, in common with contemporary developments in elementary schools. In 1861 J. Kay-Shuttleworth<sup>239</sup> referred to sport being taught in workhouse schools, but

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231. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 7th. September 1859. Marginal Comment on P.L.B. copy of minutes. P.R.O. MH12. 14142.

232. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 30th. January 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 9.

233. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 20th. March 1847. Op cit.

234. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 21st. May 1856. Op. cit. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 7.

235. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 26th. September 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14001.

236. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 24th. September 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14121.

237. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 5th. December 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 14002.

238. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 20th. May 1866. P.R.O. MH12. 13939. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 11.

239. S.C. on Poor Relief, 1861-2. P.P. (323) IX. 2nd. Report. Q.4511.

there was no indication of this happening in Worcestershire.

At Pershore in 1839 the Visiting Committee ordered "that the books recommended by J.C. Symons, [the H.M.I.] for the use of the school be purchased".<sup>240</sup> J.C. Symons had recommended other equipment, but only threatened to withhold the government grant if the books were not purchased. The books were ordered, but other materials where the Grant was not threatened were not ordered, illustrating the effectiveness of threats to withhold the government grant. In 1848 at both Bromsgrove <sup>241</sup> and Droitwich <sup>242</sup> writing was taught using copybooks and alphabet cards. At Kidderminster in 1848 <sup>243</sup> and Droitwich in 1851 <sup>244</sup> the reading books were found to be inadequate and more books were ordered. Even this sometimes caused dispute. Worcester Guardians in 1852<sup>245</sup> ordered new reading books when the H.M.I. criticised the existing school books. The Poor Law Board claimed that they had received no such order. The reason

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240. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. August 1839. Op cit.

241. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 28th. February 1848. Op cit.

242. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 4th. October 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 13933. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 3.

243. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. December 1848. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 7. P.R.O. MH12. 14019.

244. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 10th. September 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 13934. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 5.

245. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 11th. October 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14207.



for this was not explained, but it could have been an example of the Guardians' prevarication. Sometimes books were provided from other sources. At Bromsgrove, in 1852,<sup>246</sup> Lord Lyttelton <sup>247</sup> gave books to be lent to inmates and at Kidderminster <sup>248</sup> Bibles were given to children whose conduct had been good whilst in the workhouse, providing they could read. Later in the same union The Village Lesson Book<sup>249</sup> was given, a gift endorsed by the H.M.I. A similar scheme was adopted at Dudley in 1857, <sup>250</sup> when the Bibles were paid for by Sir Horace St. Paul, Bart. H.M.I.'s compared schools in the same workhouse. At Worcester in 1863 it was said "the girls are more lively and intelligent and more correct than the boys",<sup>251</sup> but later <sup>252</sup> the H.M.I. was critical of both

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246. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 4th. February 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

247. Lord Lyttelton. 1817-76. Baron Lyttelton of Frankley. Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. (B.A./M.A.) Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire. "At....the centre of the intellectual life and progress of the county". (D.N.B. Vol.XII. p.374.) Principal of Queen's College, Birmingham. (1845) President of Birmingham and Midland Institute. (1853) Founder of St. Peter's Training College, Saltley. Clarendon Royal Commission, Chief Commissioner. (1861) Chief of Endowed Schools' Commission. (1869-74).

248. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. May 1852, Sanctioned 13th. September 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14020. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 9.

249. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 11th. November 1856. P.R.O. MH12. 14021. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 11.

250. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 24th. September 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 13964. D.P.L.

251. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. April 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14210.

252. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. September 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 14210.

schools. Schools in the same locality were sometimes compared, as at Martley in 1863 where it was reported; "I think that most children ought to be affected [by the school] and find the children are much more advanced in other workhouses under similar circumstance....[Martley was]....not in an advanced state".<sup>253</sup> Comparisons were sometimes made with workhouse schools not known to the Guardians as at Droitwich in 1861 where the H.M.I. stated; "The difference between one workhouse and another is really astonishing as any Guardian would find who might happen to visit Rippon Workhouse, where 18 or 20 children are instructed by a schoolmistress under similar circumstances".<sup>254</sup> Most commonly the same school at different times was compared, as for instance at Stourbridge in 1858 where the H.M.I. stated; "The instruction was next to none in May and indeed not to say that its state [even if improved] in August is not the slightest proof that I had made any mistake when I inspected it".<sup>255</sup> He commented in 1864; "The boys' school is in a very low state at present owing I think to the recent discharge of the more forward pupils, but when I remember it as it was in 1861, I cannot help but

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253. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. July 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14088. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 406. Par. 1.

254. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 14th. August 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 13938. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 9.

255. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 31st. August 1858. H.M.I.'s Report. P.R.O. MH12. 14142.

suspect that there may have been some neglect on behalf of the previous schoolmaster".<sup>256</sup>

Comment on the state of the children's learning, or lack of it, was made in 1847 at Shipston-on-Stour where the H.M.I. commented; "The children are numerous in proportion to the number of adult inmates. They are taught by a young schoolmistress who was appointed about 6 weeks ago and is on trial. They are very backward".<sup>257</sup>

At Worcester also in 1847 it was said "the girls are well behaved, but backward in learning".<sup>258</sup> Four months later he commented; "I found the girls so ignorant that in my opinion the schoolmistress must be incompetent".<sup>259</sup> The situation generally in the 1860's was described by Assistant Commissioner Ruddock who stated "Workhouse Schools are below the reasonable standard of elementary schools", but of the situation in 1859 he had stated there was "a gratifying improvement....with greater amounts of general intelligence, and generally speaking, with better religious instruction".<sup>260</sup> At Worcester in 1864 the

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256. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 17th. April 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 14143.

257. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 20th. March 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14118.

258. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 30th. September 1847. H.M.I.'s Report. P.R.O. MH12. 14210.

259. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. January 1848. H.M.I.'s Report. P.R.O. MH12. 14210.

260. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.58.

H.M.I. described the children as "heedless"<sup>261</sup> in their answers, but in contrast at Shipston-on-Stour a few months later; "the children showed a great deal of intelligence in their answers". H.M.I.'s had to judge teaching by effective answering as they had little else to base their assessment on, but some teachers practised answering with their pupils, which was understandable as the teacher's salary depended from 1862 on this inspection. Evesham pupils in 1866 had not learned this skill, however, as it was stated "the children have not learned to attend to what they are about"<sup>262</sup> and at Droitwich in 1867; "The children....appeared dull and required to be clearly questioned as to the meaning of their lessons to be led to think and to exercise their minds".<sup>263</sup>

#### **x. Books.**

In 1847 the Privy Council Committee on Education described workhouse schools as being "wretchedly supplied with books and apparatus".<sup>264</sup> This led to the issuing of a Circular in 1849 "extending to the

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261. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 28th. June 1864. H.M.I.'s Report. Reported 1-9-64. P.R.O. MH12. 14210.

262. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 12th. September 1866. H.M.I.'s Report. Reported. 18-2-67. P.R.O. MH12. 14002.

263. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 18th. September 1867. P.R.O. MH12. 13940. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 12.

264. P.C.C.E. Minutes 1847-8-9. p.v. Cited in S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op cit. p.58.

workhouse schools the privilege of getting at low cost the school books of which they [the Privy Council Committee on Education] had arranged the publication for elementary schools".<sup>265</sup> Savings of between 32% and 55% on the cost of these books were available, the average saving being 43%. The Poor Law Board were "desirous of promoting the introduction of suitable books into workhouse schools" and they "succeeded in making arrangements with several publishers to supply, for the use of the schools, the books and maps in question, on the same terms as they are furnished to their Lordships [the Privy Council Committee on Education] for the use of other schools".<sup>266</sup> "Books for the use of scholars" (See Table 6.1) and "Books for the use of teachers" were available similar to those recommended for elementary schools, so that workhouse children could be treated in a similar way to their non-pauper contemporaries. This happened only if such books were purchased. Only a minority of workhouses ordered books. What was ordered differed from workhouse to workhouse and any uniformity was eroded. There were seventy two scholars' books and fifty five teachers' books listed together with one hundred and fifteen maps.

Books were ordered from "the Poor Law Board's publisher - Mr. Charles King" and full details of the books were

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265. P.L.B. Circular, 25th. January 1849. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 69.

266. P.L.B. 2nd. Annual Report. 1850. p.25. P.R.O. ZHCl. 1866.

given. Such purchases were to be "devoted solely to the use of the said school, and that the name of the Union

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TABLE 6.1.

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SCHEDULE I. Scholars' Books

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Reading Lesson Books.	37.
Grammar and Etymology.	11.
Arithmetic.	11.
Geography.	8.
English History.	2.
Mensuration.	1.
Vocal Music.	2.

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TOTAL. 72.

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SCHEDULE II. Teachers' Books.

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Reading and Composition.	4.
Writing.	5.
Grammar and Etymology.	6.
Arithmetic.	8.
Husbandry.	1.
Domestic Economy.	6.
Geography.	11.
English History.	3.
History of Scotland.	2.
Preservation of Health.	2.
Principles of Teaching.	6.
Mensuration.	1.

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TOTAL. 55

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MAPS. 115.

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shall be written or stamped in each book as soon as received." Details of the numbers of children and teachers at the school were required possibly as a control on parsimony or extravagance (Parsimony

appearing more likely), but it may also have checked on "Less Eligibility". The books varied in price from a halfpenny for The Childs' First Reading Book to 7/6d for Reading Disentangled, being a series of elementary reading lessons on sheets pasted to millboard. The maps varied in price from 1/9d. for a map of the British Isles and one of Palestine to £3/10/0d. for a set of ten maps in a wooden case. There was no reduction for bulk purchases. 23 book publishers were represented. 267 Larger publishing houses clearly considered this a profitable market. The Government through the Education Department published A Box of Singing Tables for Elementary Schools. H.M.I.'s recommended these books and sometimes enforced their recommendations by threatening to withhold grant payments. 268

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267. Black, Blackie, B. and F.S.S. Cadell, Chambers, Cornwell, Deighton, Groombridge, Irish Board, Leitch, M'Phail, Oliver and Boyd, Parker, Ridgway, Rivington, Simpkins and Marshall, Simmons and McIntyre, S.P.C.K. S.S.B.A. Sullivan, Taylor and Walton, The Government, and Varty.] and 6 map publishers. [Chambers, W. and A.K. Johnson, Smith and Sons (for the Irish Board), S.P.C.K. White (for S.S.B. Association) and Varty.

268. At Upton on Severn, in 1853, (19-5-53) an Irish Society Reading book specifically for girls was recommended. (19-5-53) Greig's Domestic Economy was recommended, as a class book at Evesham, in 1857, (1-1-57) but the advice was clearly not heeded, because it was recommended again in 1859. (1-6-59) In 1863, the H.M.I. recommended, the S.P.C.K. publication, History of England, at Worcester, (9-4-63) (and at Stourbridge, (17-4-63) and Shipston on Stour (4-10-63.)) In 1867, the S.P.C.K. again offered concessionary rates on books, and two unions, Evesham (12-4-67) and Bromsgrove, (23-8-67) availed themselves of this offer. From 1860, books published by the Irish Society were popular with H.M.I.'s, they were recommended, at Worcester in 1848, (23-2-48) and at Martley in 1861 (23-11-61) and One very important aspect was religious

At Droitwich in 1867 comment was passed on religious knowledge when the H.M.I. said "their answers were satisfactory" and; "They have evidently been well and carefully taught by the....schoolmistress".<sup>269</sup> As the chaplain who had a vested interest in religious education was in constant contact with the workhouse school, he ensured effective teaching of religious matters, although this may not have been the case everywhere. At Worcester in 1848 it was said "insufficient means have been taken to make them understand what they have learned"<sup>270</sup> regarding bible studies. Such a criticism was repeated at Kidderminster in 1848 where "out of 16 girls only 3 can read tolerably in the New Testament, none appear to understand even the simple truths of the Gospels".<sup>271</sup> Schoolmistresses rather than schoolmasters were most criticised about religious teaching. Only at Bromsgrove

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**Footnote 268 Continued.**

education at Stourbridge in 1862. (19-5-62) At Droitwich, in 1861, (29-1-61) the H.M.I. recommended, Spelling taught by Transcription and Dictation, by Richard Botterill. (Also recommended at Shipston-on-Stour, in 1861. (27-5-61)) Progressive Exercise in Arithmetic, by the same author, was also recommended in an attempt to solve teaching problems with the basic subjects. At Bromsgrove, in 1865, (15-8-65) problems with spelling led to Sullivan's Spelling Book being recommended. Maps and geography books were ordered at Evesham in 1868. (22-7-68) (Maps of England and the Holy Land were most popular.)

269. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 24th. September 1867. P.R.O. MH12. 13940. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 11 and 12.

270. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. February 1848. Op cit.

271. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. November 1848. Op cit.



in 1854 <sup>272</sup> was the schoolmaster said to have neglected the catechism; a charge strongly denied by the schoolmaster.

The school was the responsibility of the chaplain who also censored the literature coming into the workhouse. Reference to Westhampnett Union in the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act Report <sup>273</sup> showed that this was already happening in 1837. Books principally recommended by the National Schools and which the chaplain suggests as proper, were adopted. <sup>274</sup> Later he came to fulfil his role of superintending the education offered. J. Kay stated "if any other books than these [the Bible Testaments, Books of Common Prayer, and the Church Catechism] are employed, they are submitted to the chaplain....[and]....we think it is right that differences of opinion be referred to the diocese", <sup>275</sup> accepting the importance of the conscience clause. <sup>276</sup> The chaplain's importance was apparent in the county after 1840.

At Kidderminster in 1841 a lady enquired whether she might send The Saturday Magazine and The Penny

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272. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. December 1854. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

273. S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act. P.P. 1837. (138) XVII. Pt.1. Q.3668.

274. Ibid. Q.3669.

275. S.C. on the Education of the Poorer Classes, 1838. P.P. (589) VII. Question. 121.

276. 4 & 5 Will. IV. c76. Section 19.

Magazine into the workhouse "for the amusement of the poor".<sup>277</sup> Her request was refused as "it is not desirable that any book other than those used by the children the Bible, prayer book and religious tracts be allowed". At Droitwich in 1841 the chaplain declared "a tract of very objectionable character"<sup>278</sup> should be destroyed. The only individuals regularly overriding the chaplain's decisions were the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner and the H.M.I. but even they rarely questioned his decisions. For this reason the Guardians regularly asked the chaplain's advice on matters of moral, religious and educational importance. He came to express opinions on a wider range of subjects, but his advice which was usually followed was inevitably coloured by his ideology and his Anglicanism. Material published by the S.P.C.K. which was cheap was purchased by many unions, particularly as books and pamphlets were offered to the unions at concessionary rates. A 25% reduction was offered in 1847.<sup>279</sup> Such cheapness was attractive as it aided the parsimony expected of Guardians by ratepayers.

In 1844 the S.P.C.K. had gone further, offering free

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277. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. November 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 3.

278. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 23rd. June 1841. P.R.O. MH12. 13931. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 2.

279. P.L.C. Circular. 23rd. August 1847. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 68.

Bibles and prayer books to all of the county unions causing S.P.C.K. material to become the major source for teaching in workhouse schools. In 1847 Kidderminster Guardians <sup>280</sup> ordered ten Testaments and twenty Collects from the S.P.C.K. The schoolroom at Upton-on-Severn in 1853 was said to be "well provided with bibles and secular reading material"<sup>281</sup> probably from S.P.C.K. In spite of this, books were of low priority between 1834 and 1844 as auditors determined retrospectively whether books were necessary and whether Guardians' purchases could be disallowed after the event. Few Guardians took the risk of ordering more than Bibles and Prayer Books and there was a lack of enthusiasm amongst Guardians to provide more than rudimentary education. The Poor Law Commission's desire to promote education was held back by this reticence.

#### **xi. Religion.**

Proselytism was feared by most religious denominations. The Hon. Charles Langdale <sup>282</sup> a Roman Catholic gave evidence to the Newcastle Commission deploring the "system equally evil to the parent and the child,

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280. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. July 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 7.

281. UPTON-ON-SEVERN GUARDIANS, Minutes. 21st. December 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14185. W.C.R.O. Loc. 251. Acc. 414. Par. 9.

282. Hon. Charles Langdale. (1787-1868). A Roman Catholic who became one of the first Catholic M.P.'s after the Emancipation Act. He was M.P. for Beverley (1833-4) and M.P. for Knaresborough (1837-41). He was Chairman of the Catholic Poor Schools' Society.

utterly alienating the latter from any feeling of affection towards those whom the law both of nature and of God command them to love and reverence....a violation of every human feeling and I may add, too generally of every principle of the rights and conscience".<sup>283</sup> This matter was constantly emphasised by non-Anglican Guardians and ministers. A recent investigation of religious education in workhouses in the period 1834 to 1871 <sup>284</sup> suggests that educational innovation often originated with non-Anglican Guardians. Such innovations were suppressed because of the reactionary 'rump' of Anglican Guardians on most Boards.

This appeared to be the case at Dudley in 1858 <sup>285</sup> where a Roman Catholic Guardian proposed a motion to ensure that Roman Catholic children were not proselytised. The majority of Dudley's Guardians, who were Anglicans reacted immediately and strongly proposing an amendment that the motion was "in direct antagonism with the principles of the glorious protestant constitution of this Kingdom". The motion was said to be

the results of popish influence....[and]....a step in a determined effort now made by Romanists to undermine the principles of our glorious protestant constitution in church and state - As protestant subjects of our

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283. N.R.C., 1861. P.P. (2794-V) XXI. Part.V. p.291.

284. OBERMANN, Op cit. p.64.

285. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 9th. December 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 13964. D.P.L.

beloved Queen, we firmly and positively decline to give any direction to the Master of our workhouse to enable him to act under it (the motion).

This was strongly supported and a letter was sent to the Poor Law Board restating the resolution and describing "Popish Education".<sup>286</sup> Religion provided an imposed morality, acceptable to the ruling elite of society, and schoolteachers who were not Anglicans were expected to teach the Church Catechism. At Evesham in 1859 <sup>287</sup> a "Strict Baptist" was appointed as teacher, but he agreed to teach the Catechism and his appointment was sanctioned. <sup>288</sup> By laying down explicit rules and by rigorously applying them, "social control" was maintained. The experiences of the pauper child were manipulated to maintain acceptable influences as it was to the advantage of the 'ruling elite' that this be done, thus demonstrating paternalistic motives. <sup>289</sup>

#### **xii. Special Institutions.**

Locally workhouse schools were thought appropriate for most pauper children, but some children posed problems. Non-Anglican children were a problem because the workhouses were Anglican dominated. Orphans and deserted children caused another problem. The blind

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286. DUDLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 13th. July 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 13964. D.P.L.

287. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 12th. July 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14001.

288. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes. 19th. July 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14001.

289. As suggested by ROBERTS, D. Paternalism in Early Victorian England Croom-Helm, 1979.

child and the deaf and dumb child also had special needs that were difficult to satisfy in the workhouses. Special institutions were set up by philanthropic groups to cater for children, who were for instance blind, deaf or dumb. These institutions accepted workhouse children although fees had to be paid illegally. Payments were eventually questioned by the Central Authority under the Certified Schools' Act of 1862. <sup>290</sup> Only if the institution was certified were such payments allowed. County unions rid themselves of such children to such institutions. At Bromsgrove in 1862 <sup>291</sup> expenditure on a boy attending the Birmingham Blind Asylum was questioned by the auditors because the asylum was not recognised under the Act. It was not certified. <sup>292</sup>

### **xiii. Conclusions.**

The improved efficiency of the workhouse schools was accounted for by Coode, the Assistant Secretary of the Poor Law Board, who stated that it was due to:

- "1. the regularity of attendance of the children.
2. the adequacy of the teaching power.
3. the unambitious nature of the education given which gives time for what is taught to be taught properly.

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290. 25 & 26 Vict. c.43.

291. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. June 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

292. 14 & 15 Vict. c.43.

4. the mixture of industrial and mental work taught to the children. They rarely receive more than three hours' mental culture a day.

5. the constant intercourse between the children and their teacher, they being out of reach of [what are often the vulgar and demoralising] influences of home".<sup>293</sup>

Coode concluded that "if improvements are required, they will be introduced, but not from the fine dictates of empiricism". Thus, to insure future success he suggested that:

"1. To keep the standards of mental education within moderate bounds.

2. To extend the means of industrial training as far as practicable.

3. To provide that the classification be strictly adhered to and that the children on no account be allowed to come into contact with adults.

4. To impress on the Boards of Guardians the necessity of using great caution in selecting the employers with whom they are to place the children as servants.

5. And to exercise a strict supervision of them through the agency of their officers, for some time after they have left the workhouse to enter on their services".<sup>294</sup>

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293. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.8.

294. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.25.

Whilst it would be an overstatement to claim "class conspiracy" as the only determinant of workhouse education between 1834 and 1871 the interaction of the Central Authority's influence with that of the local Guardians (and of the chaplain) gave a commonality to the type of religious teaching offered and to the general education provided. The Central Authority was apparently not concerned when this situation evolved. The religious and general education offered conformed to the "Principle of National Uniformity". This theoretically created uniformity and hindered social change. The paupers were subjugated by a bureaucratic organisation designed and manipulated by one social grouping, the 'ruling elite'. The worst excesses of this system were cautioned against by Assistant Commissioner W.H.T. Hawley when he said it was "contrary to prudence and justice to permit unauthorised experimentalists ....ignorant of the nature of those regulations as they are of their scope and necessity, to tamper with a measure of vast social reform."<sup>295</sup> Undoubtedly workhouse children gained something from the education they received and as has been suggested "workhouses and reformatories really could confer a benefit....for in a fast evolving industrial society the analphabetic was at an even graver disadvantage....and the unemployed man who could not write was doubly likely to be reduced to

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295. S.C. on the Education of Pauper Children, 1861-2. Op. cit. p.24.



beggary".<sup>296</sup> Advantage there certainly was, but at what cost? One would thus disagree with Crowther when he stated; "As educational institutions the Poor Law schools seem never to have succeeded".<sup>297</sup> In Worcestershire they were relatively successful given the generally primitive nature of elementary education available in much of the county prior to the 1870 Education Act. <sup>298</sup> They also attempted to prepare their pupils for an occupation in a way that no elementary school in the county did. The next chapter of this study relates to Industrial Training.

Whilst one must agree with Duke's judgement that the major function of the curriculum of the workhouse school was to "inculcate habits of industry and docility"<sup>299</sup> some workhouse children undoubtedly gained much more than this. However, this was an unintended outcome as the workhouse regime was certainly seen as moral training by most advocates of the New Poor Law, be they idealogues, churchmen or enthusiastic "expert laypeople". It can be argued that this was exactly how elementary education was perceived and that this too was poor relief and hence the needs of workhouse children

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296. CHESNEY, K. The Victorian Underworld, Penguin, 1974, p.243.

297. CROWTHER, M.A. The Workhouse System 1834 to 1929 Batsford, 1981. p.205.

298. 33 & 34 Vict. c.75.

299. DUKE, F. , "Pauper Education" in FRASER, D. (ed.), The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century, Macmillan, 1976, p.65.

were no different from the needs of their contemporaries. A commonality of approach would be expected between workhouse and elementary schools. In both schooling systems the Anglican Church was particularly active in organising the education provided, although in the case of workhouse schools they lacked the fiscal control they had within National Society schools. However, the requirement that the workhouse chaplain be an Anglican compensated for this, making the workhouse school overtly Anglican, which greatly concerned representatives of other denominations who claimed proselytism. All aspects of the workhouse child's life were determined by the chaplain and influenced by his personal religious ideology and commitment, even if this was sometimes unconsciously.

Workhouse education was considered of such great importance that its improvement appeared inevitable in spite of the problems of appointing good staff. Such improvement was aided by two important measures: school inspection and a government grant in support of schools. In spite of improvements the workhouse remained no place for children and there was continuous concern amongst Poor Law officials about their plight. In spite of contemporary opinions that the workhouse school was the equal of elementary schools outside the workhouse many remained suspicious about this view.

Most Guardians could subscribe to the opinion that the workhouse should maintain a moral environment and there was a consensus about this. The staff with whom workhouse children came into contact had to be beyond reproach. Pauper inmates as teachers were soon rejected as unsuitable for this reason. Guardians were also assiduous in their adherence to Rules and Regulations regarding separation of pauper children from adult inmates. However, with regard to education Guardians were less enthusiastic. Digby<sup>300</sup> described how Guardians in Norfolk were willing to accept the recommendations of James Kay regarding the setting up of workhouse schools. These enlightened attitudes were almost completely lacking in Worcestershire. It appeared likely that the lack of Kay's influence so far from East Anglia was the cause of this.

Boards of Guardians were elected by rate-payers and saw it as in their supporters' interest to be as parsimonious as possible regarding Poor Law spending. For this reason, given that they had to provide education, they would support the workhouses school, as these were the cheapest form of education available. However, most rural Guardians were blinkered and could see little purpose in intellectual education for future agricultural labourers and in this respect they differed from some urban Guardians who saw some utility in

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300. DIGBY, A., Pauper Palaces, R.K.P., 1978.  
educating potential employees. Generally speaking there

educating potential employees. Generally speaking there was less resistance to workhouse education in urban unions than in rural ones. What clearly differed was the perception of the education necessary for an individual to fulfil his "station in life".

Opinions differed as to what should be included in the workhouse schools' curriculum, with some rural Guardians resisting teaching writing, whilst urban Guardians were more expansive in their thinking about the school curriculum. Even when the curriculum was decided, however, matters such as the number and type of books and other equipment available, the state of the schoolroom and the quality of the schoolteachers were important. Insufficient books and equipment were sometimes remedied by the intervention of H.M.I., who threatened to withhold the grant until the Central Authority's wishes were carried out and few Guardians resisted the determined Assistant Poor Law Commissioner or H.M.I. who eventually got his way. There were cases, however, where determined Guardians delayed innovation using a variety of tactics. Here there was a continued adherence to the Principles of "Less Eligibility" and "National Uniformity" for all classes of pauper, which these Guardians continued to see as inviolable, after these had been rejected as inappropriate for children by Poor Law officials soon after 1834.

Divergence of opinion was not just between the Poor Law

Central Authority and Guardians. What may be referred to as "expert laypeople", who spent much energy and time in becoming expert regarding the "pauper class", also disagreed with emerging policy. These individuals formed the Workhouse Visiting Society in the late 1850's as an offshoot of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, but they were seen as meddling amateurs by central Poor Law administrators. However, they did form a vociferous opposition to altered policy and the basis of much adverse criticism to the Newcastle Royal Commission about workhouse schooling.

Ironically this criticism unified Poor Law Board official thinking about workhouse schools. Evidence from Poor Law Board officials to the Select Committee set up in 1862 as a result of the adverse criticisms made in the Newcastle Royal Commission Report was positive about the developments that had occurred in workhouse schools. If a distinction was made between transient and "long stay" inmate children, then workhouse schools were successful. They prevented return to the workhouse of children who had been in them for sufficient time for that schooling to be effective.

This also settled the debate about District and Separate Schools, which had been set up in the metropolis and elsewhere in the urban south-east to the acclaim of influential partisan individuals within the headquarters

of the Poor Law Board. However, these were an irrelevance in most areas of the country. Although literature published from the mid 1840's to the late 1850's promoted District Schools and denigrated workhouse schools the idea was unworkable in most urban and all rural unions. Studies such as that of Ross<sup>301</sup>, based on Central Authority sources, inevitably overstate the importance of the District School idea. In Worcestershire, Guardians were forced to consider the idea because of Poor Law Board insistence, but they were realistic enough to recognise it as unworkable, even before the District School Act demonstrated this to be the case. School Districts as proposed were impossible to form.

The H.M.I. responsible for Worcestershire Workhouse Schools, T.B. Browne, strongly supported such schools both nationally and locally. As with Kay's influence in Norfolk,<sup>302</sup> Browne's influence was mainly felt regionally on the west side of England where he was H.M.I.. Statements made by the Webbs<sup>303</sup> that District Schools were supported by all Poor Law officials must therefore be questioned.

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301. ROSS, A.M., "The Care and Education of Pauper Children in England and Wales 1834 to 1896", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1955.

302. DIGBY, Op cit p. 180.

303. WEBB, S. and B., English Poor Law History, Part II, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 264.

What occurred in the Poor Law schooling system was probably inevitable given its organisation and size - it became bureaucratised, which led to an increased expertise amongst Officials. A dual system was created with a national upper tier and a local lower one, essentially a prototype of the system adopted after the 1870 Education Act<sup>304</sup> in elementary education. The Worcestershire workhouse schools undoubtedly improved under this influence, in spite of continuing criticism of the premises in which schooling took place. Schoolrooms were inadequate between October and March when the workhouses were full to capacity but in the Spring and Summer they emptied and were then adequate. Gradually, however, school premises improved and innovations were apparent, many being adopted from National Schools. For instance the gallery was in use in some county workhouse schools.

Rural schools undoubtedly differed from urban ones, partly as a function of size, but also because of Guardians' attitudes. Rural Unions tended to have more conservative Guardians than urban ones and in most urban places the major tenets of the Poor law - "National Uniformity" and "Less-eligibility" were abandoned without concern. In rural places Guardians often adhered rigidly to these, in part due to their parsimony on

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304. 33 & 34 Vict. c.75.

behalf of the farming communities they largely represented. The perspective obtained by Ross<sup>305</sup> and Obermann<sup>306</sup> from national sources largely misses this. Digby,<sup>307</sup> however, makes similar distinctions between rural and urban places in Norfolk, significantly by using Guardians' Minute Books as sources. This investigation of the education offered to children in Worcestershire workhouses gives more evidence that the workhouse was a "total institution" and that the definition and hence the nature of poverty was changing in the period 1834 to 1871.

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305. ROSS, Op cit.

306. OBERMANN, Op cit.

307. DIGBY, Op cit.



## CHAPTER 7.

### EMPLOYMENT AND THE WORKHOUSE CHILD IN WORCESTERSHIRE POOR LAW UNIONS 1834 TO 1871.

It was the Poor Law Commission's belief that the workhouse was no place for children, that instead they should be kept in specialist institutions staffed by trained staff, thus protecting this most vulnerable group from the dangers of life long pauperism thought to be endemic to the general workhouses. Such specialised separate treatment was most important of all for the long term child inmates likely to spend up to sixteen years in general workhouses. But whilst most Poor Law Guardians, including those in Worcestershire, subscribed to this theory, the practicalities of poor relief for children made such specialist institutions impossible, either for financial or organisational reasons. The reality of the situation in Worcestershire was that the workhouses after the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act predated that Act and were designed to accommodate fewer paupers of a very different character from those they were now expected to serve. Only Dudley had a separate children's department and even that was accommodated in an old workhouse that was inappropriate to its new use. Inmate pauper children were thus to be found mainly in general workhouses where segregation was imperfect and incomplete, the staff generally untrained to deal with children, and education and training seen as the only means of ameliorating conditions. In this circumstance

the Guardians saw virtue in removing children from the workhouse and placing them out as apprentices and servants at the earliest possible opportunity.

Ironically one might argue that it was the long term pauper child inmate who suffered most from the Poor Law Commission's orthodoxy regarding apprenticeship. As was discussed in chapter 2 of this study, apprenticeship had been used under the Old Poor Law to rid parishes of destitute, orphaned and deserted children, gaining advantages for the parish, but also for the child. However, under the New Poor Law the Central Authority sought to dissuade Guardians from apprenticing such children, which was explicable because it wished to maintain the "Principle of Less Eligibility". They argued that continuation of apprenticeship placed such children in an unacceptably advantageous position over their non-pauper contemporaries, a rationale that was unconvincing to local Boards of Guardians who administered workhouses containing many such children. In urban unions this problem was particularly pressing and was a cumulative one. In these circumstances the Guardians demanded to be allowed to restart apprenticing, which solved their problems of segregating and educating these children in totally inappropriate workhouse premises. These arguments clearly proved convincing, because the Poor Law Commission soon tacitly allowed apprenticing, arguably saving face by attempting to dissuade Guardians from

paying premiums with apprentices, thus preventing a complete breach of the "Principle of Less Eligibility".

This chapter investigates pauper apprenticing between 1834 and 1871. It examines the notion that the Principles of "Less Eligibility" and "National Uniformity" were maintained in spite of the widespread use of apprenticeship and service as a means of dealing with the child pauper problem. Most importantly, however, it attempts to evaluate the utility of apprenticeship to the pauper child. Finally an attempt is made to chart the Central Poor Law Authority's ideological shift from determined opposition to pauper apprenticeship to its tacit acceptance of such schemes. The ambivalence of the middle and upper classes towards the system of apprenticing pauper children was reflected in the Poor Law Inquiry Commission Report of 1834.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand virtue was seen in poor children, who were regarded as potential paupers, being removed from their parish of origin to be apprenticed because at the termination of their apprenticeship these children altered their settlement, thus ceasing to be a burden on their home parish. On the other hand, however, apprenticeships under the Old Poor Law were sometimes enforced with poor children being allotted to the next ratepayer on the rota to receive an apprentice, which

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1. The Poor Law Report of 1834 (eds. CHECKLAND, S.G. and E.O.A.), Penguin, 1974.

was disliked by master and apprentice alike. Allotment of apprentices had been used in Powick parish between 1780 and 1834 apparently causing resentment because it took no cognisance of the ability of the ratepayer to support the apprentice or of the worth of the apprenticeship to the child. The Inquiry Commission's Report attempted to except relief of pauper apprentices from the general abolition of outdoor relief for the able bodied. It recommended that the Central Administration make regulations for apprenticing and that compulsory apprenticing be abandoned. These recommendations were based on information on "the practice in different parishes for apprenticing poor children", but the Inquiry Commission eventually reported; "We have less information on this subject than on any other subject".<sup>2</sup> Because the evidence was scant and "contradictory" it was impossible to draw conclusions. They thus asked for a period of "experimentation" before apprenticeship regulations were rewritten to allow the situation to be appraised.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 did not repeal the existing law relating to apprenticeship. Instead it accepted the need for relief by apprenticeship for children deemed in need. In spite of this, however, the Central Administration, the Poor Law Commission, did not encourage apprenticeship because on its own admission

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2. Ibid. p.466.

the Commission "certainly entertain(ed) opinions unfavourable to that state of servitude which is created by apprenticing pauper children".<sup>3</sup> This opinion undoubtedly coloured their attitude throughout the period from 1834 to 1847 (when the Commission was replaced by the Poor Law Board) which arguably maintained the "Principle of Less Eligibility". However, Boards of Guardians formed to administer the Poor Law locally held very different opinions about apprenticing. Whilst most parish authorities may have agreed, with the Central Authority, regarding "Less Eligibility", they had, in the period before 1834, found apprenticing functional in ridding them of the burden of destitute children, particularly as many of the parish administrators, under the previous law, were elected to the Boards of Guardians. They saw a continuing need for them. Therefore a conflict between central and local administrations appeared inevitable. The Poor Law Commission issued no rules and regulations regarding apprenticing during its first decade of operation. In spite of the passing of the Parish Apprentices Act of 1842,<sup>4</sup> it took another Act of Parliament in 1844<sup>5</sup> to force them to issue regulations for apprenticeship. Even now, however, they enclosed a letter with the regulations making clear their opposition to the practice, stating that they hoped

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3. P.L.C. 11th. Annual Report 1845. PRO ZHC1. 1551.

4. 5 & 6 Vict. c.57.

5. 7 & 8 Vict. c.101.

"that the regulations imposed by us tend gradually to diminish the number of children thus dealt with."<sup>6</sup> They wanted to prohibit the payment of premiums with apprentices, unless they were infirm, but as parish authorities had conventionally paid premiums with apprentices, believing that suitable masters would not be found if incentives were not offered, the Commission found it impossible to do this. In 1845 <sup>7</sup> regulations were written to include the payment of premiums with apprentices, but these rules were produced with ill grace as the Poor Law Commission again made it clear that they did not see apprenticeship as part of official policy. In a Circular Letter accompanying the regulations it stated that the system of apprenticing "doubtless (will) continue to be practised in those districts where it has hitherto prevailed", but the Commission did not admit "any desire to promote its introduction". However, urban Poor Law Unions had continually pressed to be allowed to apprentice pauper children and therefore the practicalities of local Poor Law Administration were more important than the ideological considerations of the central administrators.

Table 7.1 indicates the numbers of pauper children bound apprentice in the county unions at various dates

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6. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 21st. January 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14104. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 3.

7. Ibid.

**TABLE 7.1.**

The Number of Pauper Apprentices by Sex 1834 to 1871.

NUMBER.

DATE	Male.	Female.	Total.
1834	0	0	0
1835	0	0	0
1836	0	0	0
1837	3	0	3
1838	23	1	24
1839	15	2	17
1840	17	1	18
1841	4	0	4
1842	2	1	3
1843	0	0	0
1844	5	0	5
1845	11	2	13
1846	9	0	9
1847	7	6	13
1848	4	2	6
1849	5	4	9
1850	10	2	12
1851-5	72	11	83
1856-60	70	24	94
1861-5	49	18	67
1866-70	38	17	55
1871	3	0	3
TOTAL	347	91	438

SOURCE: Worcestershire Boards of Guardians' Minute Books 1834 to 1871.

between 1837 and 1871 and was compiled from Board of Guardians' minute books. Most county unions became

operational in 1837 and thus analysis starts at that date, with the part of the table referring to the period from 1837 to 1850 organised to identify apprenticings year by year. However, when apprenticing patterns become constant a five year period was used for analysis. Bromsgrove and Kidderminster Unions restarted apprenticing in September 1837, but the Poor Law Commission through its local officials, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, generally continued to discourage apprenticeship. However, they were clearly ineffective because in 1838, 1839 and 1840 apprenticings were relatively common. There were only five girls out of a total of seventy children apprenticed during this time, possibly indicating the relative ease with which girls could be found employment in domestic service, so that there was little need to apprentice them. The deliberations leading to the Parish Apprentices Act of 1842 had an effect with apprenticings being much reduced in numbers in 1841 and 1842. Around the date of the 1844 Act there was a total halt to apprenticing, but between 1844 and 1847 there was a steady increase in apprentice numbers, with girl apprentices becoming more common. Thirteen of the sixty-seven children apprenticed between 1837 and 1847 were girls, with over half of these apprenticed after 1847, possibly encouraged by the new regulations which allowed a premium to be offered with them.



Table 7.2 indicates the amount of apprenticing in the various county unions. Eleven of the thirteen unions included in this study apprenticed pauper children in the period 1837 to 1871, only Evesham and Martley Unions apprenticed none. In Evesham Union this was a continuation of previous practice under the Old Poor Law, but Martley, a sparsely populated rural union, had

**TABLE 7.2.**

Pauper Apprenticeship Indentures in Worcestershire Poor Law Unions 1834 to 1871.

UNION.	M	%	F	%	T
BROMSGROVE.	106	96	4	4	110
DROITWICH.	36	64	20	36	56
DUDLEY.	1		1		2
EVESHAM.	0		0		0
KIDDERMINSTER.	97	84	18	16	115
KING'S NORTON.	70	70	30	30	100
MARTLEY.	0		0		0
PERSHORE.	11	50	11	50	22
SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR.	4		4		8
STOURBRIDGE.	8		0		8
TENBURY WELLS.	0		1		1
UPTON-ON-SEVERN.	2		2		4
WORCESTER.	12		0		12
<b>TOTAL.</b>	<b>347</b>		<b>91</b>		<b>438</b>

SOURCE: Worcestershire Boards of Guardians' Minute Books 1834 to 1871.

previously apprenticed many children. After 1834 rural unions minimised their use of apprenticing because the numbers of pauper children were small enough to be found employment without apprenticeship. Thus Martley union

was broadly in line with rural unions elsewhere in the county. Urban unions after 1837 apprenticed most children, but Dudley Union was an exception to this. It apprenticed only one boy between 1837 to 1871, which was probably due to the relative ease of obtaining employment for pauper children in the burgeoning industrial area of the Black Country surrounding Dudley. A similar explanation probably also accounted for Stourbridge and Worcester Unions' lack of pauper apprentices. However, Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Kidderminster and King's Norton Unions apprenticed substantial numbers of pauper children, although all of these unions were based on urban places where child destitution was a great problem. Pershore, at the centre of a market gardening area, was not a typical rural union, with work even more seasonal and casual than in other rural unions. There were difficulties here in finding permanent employment for young children and the need for apprenticeship was thus great. The union apprenticed equal numbers of pauper boys and girls, which was probably explained by the lack of suitable employment for girls in the area. In other unions where substantial numbers of pauper children were apprenticed a large majority of those bound were boys, who were apprenticed outside the union. This was advantageous because the child was resettled to the place where it was apprenticed.

Table 7.3 investigates the dates at which pauper children were apprenticed in Bromsgrove, Kidderminster and King's Norton Unions, all unions where over one-hundred pauper children had been apprenticed in the period 1837 to 1871. These three unions recommenced

**TABLE 7.3.**

The Number of Pauper Apprentices from Worcestershire Poor Law Unions 1837-71.

DATE	BROMSGROVE			KIDDERMINSTER			KING'S NORTON		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1837	1	0	1	2	0	2	0	0	0
1838	7	0	7	4	0	4	7	0	7
1839	2	0	2	3	1	4	1	1	2
1840	5	1	6	11	0	11	0	0	0
1841	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
1842	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
1843	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1844	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1
1845	4	0	4	1	0	1	3	2	5
1846	3	0	3	0	0	0	6	0	6
1847	2	0	2	1	2	3	1	0	1
1848	2	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	0
1849	3	0	3	2	1	3	0	1	1
1850	6	0	6	0	0	0	3	2	5
1851-5	26	1	27	15	1	16	8	2	10
1856-60	16	2	19	28	3	31	15	0	15
1861-5	15	0	15	15	2	17	14	11	25
1866-70	8	0	8	11	7	18	12	9	21
1871	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1
TOTAL	106	4	110	97	18	115	72	28	100

SOURCE: Boards of Guardians' Minute Books 1834 to 1871 for Bromsgrove, Kidderminster and King's Norton Unions.

apprenticing between 1837 and 1840, but all reduced their use of apprenticeship around the time of the

Parish Apprentices Act in 1844, when the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners insisted that unions await the outcome of the Act before apprenticing more children. After 1844 unions recommenced apprenticing, but each union showed a different distribution of apprentice numbers because of differences in the local economy. The reintroduction of apprentice premiums in 1845 did not greatly increase apprenticeship numbers, with unions continuing to apprentice children outside their home area. Bromsgrove and Kidderminster apprenticed children in the Black Country, close to their union, where apprentices were constantly demanded as cheap labour. In King's Norton's case, a union which was contiguous with Birmingham, apprentices were in great demand.

The "Experimentation" demanded by the Poor Law Inquiry Commission was undertaken in the first decade of the Poor Law Commission's administration, when they sought to discourage apprenticeships, particularly if a premium was paid. However, they must have recognised that the practice of paying premiums would continue. In 1837, soon after the Worcester Poor Law Union had been reformed, the Guardians wrote to the Poor Law Commission stating that the union had "healthy boys and girls suitable for apprenticing".<sup>8</sup> Before 1834 the Guardians would simply have found suitable masters and proceeded

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8. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. June 1837. P.R.O. MH12. 14202.

to apprentice these children under the 1814 Act<sup>9</sup> and would certainly have paid apprenticing premiums. In its reply the Commission referred to "the evils attending apprenticing", particularly with the "paying of premiums from the poor rates",<sup>10</sup> which they clearly regarded as iniquitous. The Commission suggested that apprenticing might be adopted for orphan children and others dependent on the parish, providing no premium apart from clothes was paid. They asserted; "It rarely happens that the labouring classes who support their families by their own exertions are in a position to give a premium with their child, a premium with a pauper child then, is a better situation than the children of the independent labourer, which would obviously be open to serious objection". To pay a premium was thus against the "Principle of Less Eligibility" which in the 1830's and early 1840's was still regarded as essential in any Poor Law administration.

Apprenticing ceased in all county unions until after September 1837. When apprenticing restarted a backlog of apprenticeships which had accumulated whilst the practice had been suspended meant that the boys apprenticed were older than previously. Table 7.4 investigates the age at which children were apprenticed between 1837 and 1871. Between 1781 and 1834, children

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9. 56 Geo. III, c.170.

10. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. June 1837. PLC letter to Guardians. Op cit.

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TABLE 7.4.

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Average Age of Apprenticing and Mean of Real  
Wage Indices by 5 yearly interval.

DATE.	AGE.	MEAN REAL WAGE INDEX.
1836-40	12.1	50.0
1841-5	11.8	53.4
1846-50	12.8	52.1
1851-5	12.7	57.1
1856-60	13.1	55.9
1861-5	13.3	56.4
1866-70	14.1	62.0

REAL WAGE INDEX BASE DATE=1900.

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SOURCES:

Of Average Age of Apprentices: Derived from Boards of  
Guardians' Minute Books 1836 to 1870.

Of Real wage Indices: TUCKER, R., "Real Wages Of  
Artisans in London 1729-1935" in TAYLOR, A.J.,  
The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial  
Revolution, Methuen, 1975, pp.21-35.

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as young as seven and eight years of age were sometimes  
apprenticed, with the average age as low as 9.1 years  
between 1796 and 1800, although it was never higher than  
11.5 years. However, between 1837 to 1871 the average  
age of apprenticing was between 11.8 and 14.1 years.  
This was partly because of legislation that outlawed the  
employment of very young children, but most importantly  
because the prevailing economic circumstances had  
generally improved thus making the apprenticing of very

young children unnecessary. A Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient of +0.64 was calculated for the relationship between the average age of apprenticing and the average real wage index, indicating a positive fairly strong relationship between an increased cost of living and the tendency for pauper children to be apprenticed at younger ages. Table 7.5 further investigates the connection between personal economic circumstances and the tendency to apprentice young

TABLE 7.5.

The Numbers of 9 to 11 year olds Apprenticed and the Mean Real Wage Index.

DATE.	NUMBER OF 9 TO 11 YEAR OLDS.	MEAN REAL WAGE INDEX.
1836-40	9	50.0
1841-5	3	53.4
1846-50	6	52.1
1851-5	5	57.1
1856-60	7	55.9
1861-5	3	56.4
1866-70	1	62.0

REAL WAGE INDEX BASE DATE=1900.

SOURCES:

Age at Apprenticeship from Boards of Guardians' Minute Books.

Of Real wage Indices: TUCKER, R., "Real Wages Of Artisans in London 1729-1935" in TAYLOR, A.J., The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution, Methuen, 1975, pp.21-35.

pauper children, who were normally only apprenticed from workhouses. The cost of living appeared critical in determining which individuals became destitute and thus logically as the real wage index increased, the cost of living fell, and the need to apprentice young children was reduced. The number of nine, ten and eleven year olds apprenticed was thus expected to be reduced. A Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient of +0.72 resulted for the relationship between these two distributions, indicating a fairly strong positive connection between rising cost of living and the tendency to apprentice young pauper children.

The Worcester Guardians contemplated reintroducing pauper apprenticeship in 1838, but they were extremely wary, leading them to write to the Poor Law Commission asking if the Commission had "Rules for Apprenticing".<sup>11</sup> They received a swift reply stating that no such rules yet existed, but suggesting that "only orphans, bastards and deserted children should be apprenticed", although an exception could be made for individuals "prevented by bodily and mental infirmity from providing their own livelihood".<sup>12</sup> The Guardians' interest in apprenticing was taken as a signal that the union intended to reintroduce apprenticing, so the Commission demanded

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11. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. November 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14202.

12. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15 November 1838. PLC letter to Guardians. P.R.O. MH12. 14202.



that they be kept informed of the amount of premium the Guardians intended to pay with each apprentice. It appeared to be the Commission's intention that whilst it could do little to prevent apprenticing it would attempt to dissuade Guardians from paying premiums. Inevitably, however, this would fail unless the Central Authority specifically banned premiums and monitored the ban assiduously. However, this was impossible as premiums were not illegal. Potential masters were well aware of the practice of paying premiums with pauper apprentices, and these were regarded by many as a payment to transfer an apprentice's settlement at the end of an apprenticeship. A premium was thus often expected. The Worcester Guardians having asked for advice felt obliged to adhere to the guidelines given. They thus sent details of all apprenticeships to the Commission in 1838.<sup>13</sup> All four boys apprenticed were deserted, orphaned, or were from a family where the mother was a widow. All were sent to masters of "known good character" and no premiums were involved. Thus the Poor Law Commission were satisfied and they approved these apprenticings within four days.<sup>14</sup> Worcester Union's next attempt at apprenticing came about a year later,<sup>15</sup> when they decided to apprentice six boys to carpet weavers in

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13. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 16th. November 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14202.

14. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 20th. January 1838. PLC letter to Guardians, P.R.O. MH12. 14202.

15. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. October 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14202.

Bridgnorth, but they did not ask the Poor Law Commission's advice or seek its approval on this occasion. When their minutes were received at Somerset House, the Offices of the Poor Law Commission in London, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner R. Weale was sent to investigate.<sup>16</sup> Whilst he expressed himself against the intended apprenticings, believing them not to conform to the Commission's expectations about apprenticeship because the intended masters were "unsuitable", he did not dissuade the Guardians from apprenticing the boys. Instead he adopted an alternative and intermediate strategy by laying down the following rules: The character of the intended masters were to be investigated; only orphans or bastards were to be sent on a month's trial and these children were to be given a free choice of whether they wished to be apprenticed or not, so that there was to be no coercion; and no premium apart from clothes was offered as an incentive to the master. Finally, a careful check was to be kept on the boys, who were to be produced to the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, or his agent, at least every three months, if demanded. Worcester Guardians agreed to apply these rules.

"Rules and Regulations" produced by the Poor Law Commission in 1845, had much in common with the

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16. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. October 1839. Ibid.

temporary rules produced by Mr. R. Weale in 1839.<sup>17</sup>

Under the Central Authority's rules pauper children had to be above nine years old. They could be sent to a master in trade or business on his own account for no more than eight years. There was to be no premium, apart from clothes given, "unless the person (the apprentice) was maimed, deformed, or suffering from permanent bodily infirmity", in which case a premium was paid in two instalments, half at the outset and half after one year of the apprenticeship. Apprentices were expected to read and write their names unaided before being deemed suitable for apprenticing. The permission of the parent was also necessary before the apprentice could be sent a distance of no more than thirty miles from home, a regulation usually adhered to, unless particularly good prospects were available outside the area or where a suitable relative lived in the distant area. An innovation not envisaged by R. Weale's regulations was medical inspection. Apprentices were to be certified "fit to be apprenticed" by the Workhouse Medical Officer who could also certify apprentices "infirm" or "deformed" and thus before 1845 eligible for a premium to be paid.

Another consideration regarding the suitability of an

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17. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. October 1839. Op cit.

applicant for an apprentice or servant was their social status, so that when J.C. Symons, H.M.I. for workhouse schools, applied to Kidderminster Guardians for a boy as a servant in 1852,<sup>18</sup> he was allowed one immediately and no time limit was specified on the apprenticeship indenture which was surprising, as a specified number of years written on the indenture was now a legal requirement. However, four months later<sup>19</sup> the boy was sent back as unsuitable, and in a very sorry state, such that the Guardians successfully demanded he be reclothed at J.C. Symons's expense. In contrast at Bromsgrove in 1864<sup>20</sup> Mrs. Hedley the wife of the landlord of the Black Cross Inn applied for a servant. However, this was not allowed, presumably because of the applicant's social status, although when she complained the Guardians replied with sorrow that "they had not wished to cause offence or insult to her", but she was never allowed a servant, possibly indicating the importance placed on social status in determining where servants and apprentices were sent. Only those deemed suitable were allowed pauper child servants, but there was no consistency in the application of these

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18. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. September 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 14020. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 9.

19. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. February 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 14020. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 9.

20. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. November 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

unofficial rules because in other unions children were sent as servants to other publicans.

An Act of Parliament of 1844<sup>21</sup> abolished allotment of apprentices and allowed premiums to be paid with apprentices, which led to unions becoming anxious to recommence apprenticing. The Poor Law Commission refused to be rushed, however, and as late as November 1844<sup>22</sup> when Bromsgrove Guardians asked the amount of premium that might be offered with an apprentice the Commission refused to state a fee. However, they did not state that a premium could not be paid. They gave a similar reply to Droitwich Guardians a month or so later<sup>23</sup> when a carpet weaver from Kidderminster asked for clothes for a boy sent on trial there, the Poor Law Commission said they had no rules regarding apprenticeship premiums. Rules were received in January 1845 that allowed a premium to be paid. A Circular Letter sent with these rules attempted to dissuade Guardians from paying premiums, so that Droitwich Guardians realised that the apprenticeship under discussion, whilst "not directly opposed to the wording of the Act (regarding the occupational status of the master) would at least be contrary to the spirit of the provision".<sup>24</sup> They

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21. 7 & 8 Vict. c.101.

22. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. November 1844. P.R.O. MH12. 13906. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 2(ii).

23. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. November 1844. P.R.O. MH12. 13932. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 3.

24. PLC Order, 25th. January 1845. in PLC 11th. Annual Report, PRO. ZHC1. 1551.

successfully demanded that the boy be returned to the workhouse.<sup>25</sup>

By issuing regulations in 1845 the Poor Law Commission attempted to regulate "proceedings to be taken in relation to apprenticing pauper children"<sup>26</sup> and they thus normalised the administration of apprenticing. Any union not taking due cognisance of these new regulations were thus in dispute with the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, who used financial sanctions to force them to comply with the regulations. Whereas between 1834 and 1838 individual unions' accounts were audited annually, in 1838 Audit Districts were created. Now an audit of all unions in an area was co-ordinated and if accounts were not agreed an investigation drew attention to illegal expenditure. Between 1838 and 1845 illegal apprenticeship fees were identified in this way and those deemed illegal were disallowed, making apprenticeship in all unions compliant to the Poor Law Commission's opinions. Immediately before the issuing of regulations in 1845,<sup>27</sup> Bromsgrove Guardians decided to apprentice a boy aged ten years old to a fish hook manufacturer at Redditch. A premium of two suits of

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25. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. February 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 13932. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 3.

26. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 21st. January 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14104. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 3. Op cit.

27. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. January 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 13907. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 3.

clothes and £15 was agreed, but this was deemed illegal at the annual audit,<sup>28</sup> because the apprenticeship was arranged before the payment of premiums was legalised. The Central Authority were informed of this illegality causing the premium be returned by the employer, who rather surprisingly returned the fee but not the apprentice, who was allowed to complete his apprenticeship.

Table 7.6 indicates the amount of premium paid with pauper apprentices in the period 1834 to 1871. Previously between 1781 to 1834, premiums with apprentices were relatively common, but after 1834 Guardians were dissuaded from making such payments, unless the child was disabled. This was because an able-bodied pauper child given a premium was seen as being at an advantage over its non-pauper contemporary, contravening the "Principle of Less Eligibility". Paying premiums became less common after 1834, with only three of the seventy four apprenticings in the county between 1837 and 1844 involving a premium being paid. The Commission's advice was that clothing alone be offered as an incentive to a master to take an apprentice, but clothing was seldom given in county unions. The 1845 rules allowed a premium to be paid, but this only

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28. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. May 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 13907. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 3. Op cit.

happened in forty of the three hundred and sixty three apprenticeships arranged in the county between 1845 and 1871, although in only six of these cases the premium was with an "infirm" child. Most apprenticeships were now arranged without a premium being paid and the Central Authority's advice that

TABLE 7.6.

Fees Paid with Parish Apprentices 1836 to 1871.

AMOUNT.			NUMBER.		
£	s	d	M	F	T
	10	0	0	4	4
	12	0	0	1	1
	15	0	0	4	4
	16	4	0	1	1
1	0	0	1	3	4
1	5	0	0	2	2
1	9	0	0	1	1
1	10	0	3	4	7
2	0	0	4	2	6
4	10	0	0	1	1
5	0	0	5	1	6
7	0	0	2	0	2
8	0	0	1	0	1
10	0	0	2	0	2
15	0	0	1	0	1
TOTAL			19	24	43
AVERAGE FEE			£5.03	£1.37	£2.70

SOURCE: Worcestershire Boards of Guardians' Minute Books 1834 to 1871.

premiums were unnecessary to obtain an apprenticeship for a pauper child may thus have been good advice. However, Pershore Union paid a premium with a majority



of its apprentices (sixteen out of twenty two) with only one of these children described as "infirm". In 1839<sup>29</sup> for instance the Pershore Guardians offered £10 as an incentive to gain an apprenticeship for a boy from Strensham, but why this child was selected for special treatment was unclear. In all other county unions a premium was paid in only a minority of cases. At Bromsgrove £7 -0 -0 was paid for a deaf and dumb boy to be apprenticed to a bootmaker in the town in 1851,<sup>30</sup> the only case of a premium being offered with a mute child. The other five cases of a premium paid for infirmity were for physically disabled children. With able-bodied children there appeared to be no connection between the size of a premium offered and the level of skill involved in the trade of the apprenticeship. Premiums varied between £1 and £15 for boys, and between 10s. and £2 for girls with an average premium for boys of £5 -0s.-6d. and for girls of £1 -8s. -5d, but generally county unions attempted to arrange apprenticeships at as little cost to the Poor Rates as possible, a principle approved of by both local poor-rate payers and the Central Poor Law Authority.

Some unions adopted a principle of apprentice at all cost, so that children were apprenticed to masters

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29. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. April 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14105. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 2.

30. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. November 1851 and 3rd. December 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 13909. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

considered unsuitable by the Poor Law Commission. Thus mining apprenticeships in the Black Country and carpet weaving ones in Kidderminster were much criticised. Of twenty six apprenticeships arranged by the Worcester Union in the period from June 1840 to June 1845, fifteen were to carpet weavers in Kidderminster, whilst ironically Kidderminster Union sent eight of its fifteen apprentices in the same period to miners in the Black Country, to the most hazardous and unhealthy of all occupations. This was well illustrated by the early reports of the Factory Inspectorate<sup>31</sup> who described mining accidents sometimes involving apprentices. In 1838 the death of a pauper apprentice from Droitwich was reported to the Guardians by his master, who stated that the boy had been involved in an accident that had "deprived him of life". He asked for an "allowance towards the expenses he had been put to in burying him",<sup>32</sup> but the Guardians refused to allow this, a decision with which the Poor Law Commission later agreed. Another apprentice from Grafton Flyford was killed at Old Hill, by a fall of coal in 1850.<sup>33</sup> However, whilst mining was the most dangerous of industries other trades had poor working conditions with harsh treatment of apprentices. These conditions

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31. Factory Inspection started in 1833.

32. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. August 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 13930. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 1(ii).

33. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. June 1850. P.R.O. MH12. 14106. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 5.

sometimes caused apprentices to abscond, so that in 1866<sup>34</sup> a boy from Kidderminster Union, apprenticed to a chainmaker at Cradley Heath, absconded because he said that he had been ill treated. However, he voluntarily returned to the workhouse instead of running away, which led the Guardians to investigate. It was discovered that the boy had malformed ankles and feet making it impossible for him to work as a chainmaker, so that he should never have been certified medically fit for apprenticing. Here the medical inspection had apparently been regarded as a mere formality, although the Medical Officer was not reprimanded for his inattention, nor was the case of maltreatment investigated. Instead the boy was sent to an aunt who was paid outdoor relief to care for him.

The regulations of 1845 required that "no child shall be bound to a person who is not a housekeeper, or assessed to the poor rate in his own name, or is a journeyman, or is a person not carrying on trade or business on his own account".<sup>35</sup> Thus carpet weavers were confirmed as "unacceptable as masters", because they were employed by carpet manufacturers, from about 1820 onwards, and were thus not in business on their own account. They were

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34. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. April 1866, P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 17.

35. PLC Order, 25th. January 1845. in PLC 11th. Annual Report, PRO. ZHC1. 1551.

thus clearly ineligible to take apprentices. Traditionally, however, these men had employed pauper boys and girls as "drawboys" (or girls). When in 1846<sup>36</sup> Bromsgrove Guardians apprenticed a boy to a carpet weaver in Kidderminster, they did not report this to the Poor Commission, but it was recorded in the Guardians' minutes although the case went unnoticed. Had it been noticed the Guardians would have been reprimanded for ignoring regulations. Whether this was done thus appeared a matter of chance, which must question the efficiency of the Poor Law Board's administration, because only in a small minority of cases were such illegal apprenticeships questioned. Hence Kidderminster Guardians' attempt to apprentice another boy to a carpet weaver by chance led to them being told "the apprenticing of boys to carpet weavers is not allowed".<sup>37</sup>

Coal miners appeared equally unsuitable as masters, but both Bromsgrove and King's Norton Unions in 1845<sup>38</sup> soon after the regulations were published, successfully

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36. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 31st. August 1846, P.R.O. MH12. 13907. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 3.

37. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. November 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14018. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 6.

38. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. November 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14040. BPL. F1 and BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 10th. November 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 13907. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 2(ii).

evaded the regulations by apprenticing boys to coal miners in the Black Country. However, in 1849 the Poor Law Board stated that "miners were not carrying on trade in their own right and that they were not eligible to take apprentices".<sup>39</sup> Bromsgrove Guardians were aware of the reaffirmation of the regulations, but they again apprenticed two boys to miners in 1849,<sup>40</sup> after the Medical Officer had certified them fit. No questions were asked on this occasion, but in 1851 West Bromwich Guardians objected to Bromsgrove's apprenticing of a boy in contravention of the Commission's regulation.<sup>41</sup> Bromsgrove Guardians responded by stating; "If the Board do not allow boys to miners, it will lead to serious inconvenience and difficulty",<sup>42</sup> but the Poor Law Board had no choice but to support West Bromwich Guardians' objection. However, they later changed their opinion, after Lord Lyttelton had visited Somerset House to argue Bromsgrove Guardians' case.<sup>43</sup> He argued that Black Country colliers had their own capital and were thus

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39. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. March 1849. P.R.O. MH12. 14138 and KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. September 1849. P.R.O. MH12. 14019. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 8.

40. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. March 1849. P.R.O. MH12. 13909. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 4.

41. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. March 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 13909. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

42. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 30th. April 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 13909. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

43. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. May 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 13909. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

suitable masters, an opinion with which the Poor Law Board agreed. They asserted that this was indeed a special case and that Bromsgrove Union could continue to apprentice boys as miners in the Black Country, a judgement that appeared doubtful under the regulations, but the intervention of an influential upper-class individual caused the Poor Law authorities to reconsider their decision in spite of their own suggestion that "much discrimination and careful enquiry are required before apprenticing to colliers can safely take place".<sup>44</sup> The county Boards of Guardians thus fell into two distinct groups; those with upper class individuals as members (as at Bromsgrove, Droitwich and Shipston-on-Stour) and those without such members. When the Central Administration enforced regulations they thus sometimes deferred to the status of these upper class-individuals, making the treatment of unions by the Central Authority inconsistent. Thus there was little uniformity in the process of apprenticing because the manner of applying regulations was dependent on local factors which were far from uniform.

The "Law of Settlement" still applied after the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, thus placing a burden on the parish (union) accepting the apprentice, and thus giving sufficient reason for unions accepting apprentices to be asked for their permission before an apprenticing took

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44. Ibid.

place. This happened in the case cited earlier at West Bromwich, but usually Guardians agreed to these requests and the practise was confirmed in the 1845 Rules for Apprenticeship which gave new responsibilities to apprentice masters. Thus at Bromsgrove in 1846 when a boy described as "infirm" was apprenticed to the same fish hook manufacturer who had returned an illegal premium of £15, he was also given a premium of £15, but his indenture was unique in specifying the wages to be paid as "9d per week for the first year, 11d per week for the second year, and 18d per week for the third and last year".<sup>45</sup> This complied with the 1845 "Rules for Apprenticing" in specifying wages on an indenture, but no other Guardians complied with this regulation and none were censured for this omission. A common indenture was now used specifying the master's duties, thus satisfying one of the Central Authority's disquiets about apprenticing. The Poor Law Commission's intentions were clearly stated in a Circular Letter in February 1845 that; "The object of the Commissioners has been to secure a careful attention on the part of the persons who bind children out to the fitness and propriety of the step which is to affect permanently the future condition of these children",<sup>46</sup> but the system was seen as faulty because it had previously allowed too much

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45. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. July 1846. P.R.O. MH12. 13907. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400, Par. 3.

46. PLC Circular 1845 in PLC 12th. Annual Report 1846, PRO. ZHC1. 1662.

freedom to apprentice masters. Thus the new regulations issued in 1845<sup>47</sup> limited the place of work and the place of residence of the apprentice to those stated on the indenture, because previously apprentices could sometimes not be located by Guardians when they had moved their address or even changed masters. However, this new regulation caused problems for some county unions. For instance at Bromsgrove Guardians were worried about apprentices being required to read and write their names without assistance before being apprenticed,<sup>48</sup> apparently because they were unconvinced that children from their union would be able to do this. They asked the Visiting Committee to investigate. They found that there was indeed a problem, so that the schoolteachers were told to improve their teaching of reading and writing. At Martley Union education was at fault when a girl was sent to service who was "utterly ignorant".<sup>49</sup> However, this appeared typical of the education offered to children in that rural union before about 1860.

In 1847<sup>50</sup> and 1848<sup>51</sup> it was reported that the 1844 Act was "working well", so that there was no need for the Poor Law Board to produce new orders and regulations

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47. Ibid.

48. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. January 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 13907. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 3.

49. MARTLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. September 1846, P.R.O. MH12. 14018.

50. PLC 13th. Annual Report, 1847. PRO. ZHC1. 1748.

51. PLB 1st. Annual Report, 1849. PRO. ZHC1. 1806.



regarding apprenticeship, but according to the Webbs;<sup>52</sup> by 1850 there was questioning of the desirability of apprenticeship in its existing form, because it has been suggested<sup>53</sup> that there was no pauper apprenticing other than of workhouse children between 1837 and 1850, which caused disquiet because outdoor pauper children were considered as worthy of the opportunities provided by apprenticeship as were indoor pauper children. Generally such opportunities were not available to them, and certainly not in Worcestershire.

Sending boys into the armed forces, to the merchant marine or to the fishing industry was sometimes considered by Guardians as a source of apprenticeships, but when a circular in March 1844 asked for a return of "those children removed from the union workhouses into the army, and into the navy"<sup>54</sup> there was a nil return from all county unions. Similarly when Shipston-on-Stour Union was asked in 1845<sup>55</sup> to return a form showing children apprenticed to the sea service in the period 1834 to 1845 they stated that no one had been apprenticed. Five weeks earlier, however, they had corresponded with the Commission about five boys who wished to be apprenticed at sea, asking that "the lads be

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52. WEBB, S. & B. English Poor Law History Part II, Vol. 1. Longman Green, 1929. p.298.

53. STALLARD, J.H. London Pauperism Amongst Jews and Christians, London, 1967. p.101.

54. PLC Circular, 12th. April 1844. in PLC 11th. Annual Report, PRO. ZHC1. 1551.

55. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. June 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14117.

placed on board one of H.M. ships".<sup>56</sup> On this occasion the Poor Law Commission had replied<sup>57</sup> that inexperienced people were not wanted in the navy at that time. An Act of Parliament of 1845<sup>58</sup> eventually completely prevented apprenticing on board ships, because of the conditions found there, but another Act of Parliament in 1850<sup>59</sup> created opportunities for pauper boys to be apprenticed at sea, if the shipping company was licensed to accept such trainees. Thus the Poor Law Board now encouraged Guardians<sup>60</sup> to consider merchant marine apprenticeship and a letter was enclosed listing suitable marine masters to be approached to take pauper apprentices. There was, however, no response from any county union at this time, although in 1854<sup>61</sup> Evesham Guardians asked the Poor Law Board about enlistment in the Royal Navy, to which they responded, as they had done to Shipston-on-Stour Guardians in 1845, that they thought this was impossible. Ten years later the Evesham Guardians asked about apprenticeships in the fishing trade,<sup>62</sup> causing the Poor Law Board to prevaricate by replying that this was difficult because unions had been illegally

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56. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 29th. May 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14117.

57. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. June 1845. PLC letter to Guardians, P.R.O. MH12. 14117.

58. 7 & 8 Vict. c.112.

59. 8 & 9 Vict. c.83.

60. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 14th. October 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14020. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 9.

61. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. May 1854. P.R.O. MH12. 14000.

62. EVESHAM BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. January 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 140002.

canvassed for suitable apprentices, a reply that completely missed the point. It appeared probable that this letter was sent because Droitwich Guardians had received a Circular at about this time from T. Waites and Co.<sup>63</sup>

This Company was not licensed to receive apprentices and the Poor Law Board had successfully prosecuted them previously for illegal approaches to Guardians. The Company were fined forty shillings on that occasion for a breach of Poor Law Board Regulations. Droitwich Guardians were, however, interested in such apprenticeships and they were supplied by the Poor Law Board with the name of Holbeg and Bowen Co. a shipping company licensed to take apprentices,<sup>64</sup> although there were no vacancies at this time. Two years later<sup>65</sup> Bromsgrove Guardians were approached by J. Surdin and Co. of Liverpool, a shipper licensed to take apprentices, but ironically there were no suitable boys at this time and their offer was refused. Often the demand for apprentices appeared not to coincide with the presence of suitable pauper children in the workhouses, which was probably inevitable given that destitution of

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63. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. November 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 13939. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

64. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 30th. November 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 13939. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

65. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. January 1866, P.R.O. MH12. 13912. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 7.

children available for apprenticing was caused by the same economic circumstances that led potential employers to delay taking on additional labour. After 1847, when the Poor Law Commission was replaced by the Poor Law Board, the Central Authority slowly began to change its attitude and began to encourage apprenticeship as a convenient way of ridding unions of the troublesome problem of dependent pauper children. This change was brought about by the Central Authority gradually reacting to Poor Law Unions' demands to apprentice children. As we have seen the county Guardians always favoured apprenticeship and thus Bromsgrove Guardians stated in 1847 that "much good might be effected by forming a society of ratepayers having for its object the apprenticing of poor children". The Guardians were disquieted by the tendency of pauper children in Bromsgrove Union learning nailmaking, a trade with few skills, because;

as soon as they (the children) can learn sufficient means to support themselves they begin to work on their own account, allowing their parents a portion of their earnings inadequate for their support instead of giving up the whole to their parents at a time when such help would be most useful in enabling them to economise their united means to improve their condition, besides at this period, just as children are emerging from infancy, by remaining under the control of their parents, they are

likely to acquire provident habits and become members of society.<sup>66</sup>

These Guardians demonstrated an uncharacteristic confidence in the providence of the working classes, in believing that the joint income of the family would ever be applied to supporting the whole family and thus reducing the need for Poor Relief. More usually the working classes were regarded as wholly improvident and to blame for their own parlous state. On this occasion, however, the young nailmaker who once he had gained rudimentary skills did not add to the joint income of the family, reducing its propensity to become pauperised, was blameworthy and a threat to Bromsgrove society. The Guardians considered it preferable if these boys be apprenticed and efficiently controlled by their apprentice master, presumably out of the Bromsgrove Union, so that the threat to the society was reduced. When a public meeting was called to discuss the idea and to provide a means of defraying the costs, in spite of the schemes supposed attractions the idea was rejected.

Apprenticeship remained the most common way for permanent inmate pauper children under sixteen years old to leave county workhouses between 1847 to 1871, but occasionally pauper children were removed by relatives, or were sent to orphanages or adopted. Children who were

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66. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. March 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 13908. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 3.

apprenticed were usually orphaned, deserted or bastards, having been in the workhouse for a prolonged period of time. They thus formed a large minority of workhouse child inmates and were the sole responsibility of the Guardians. However, for the majority of inmate children the workhouse was a short term expediency sought by parents in times of severe economic conditions, or when inclement weather forced them out of work in outdoor occupations, thus many of these children returned regularly to the workhouse. Few of them were apprenticed by the union unless their parents asked for help in doing this, which was an unlikely eventuality. Most such children drifted into employment, but because no records of them exist it is difficult to be specific. Of orphaned, deserted and illegitimate pauper apprentices we know more, as great care was taken in dealing with these inmates, because it was realised that "the taint of the workhouse" was on them and that they were thus at a disadvantage compared with other poor children.

From the very beginning of the county Poor Law Unions in 1836, attempts were made to distance permanent inmate children from their workhouse origins when they were apprenticed. Thus in 1839 Kidderminster Guardians ordered that the clothes of children who were to be apprenticed were "not to be pauper clothing" or to have "pauper buttons".<sup>67</sup> Thus the child was not identified as

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67. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. March 1839. P.R.O. MH12. 14017. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 2.

a workhouse child, which was considered important by Pershore Guardians, who had expressed the belief in 1839 that "boys of twelve or fourteen should as early as possible be placed in a situation where they can obtain their own livelihood, as continuance in the workhouse under any circumstances cannot fail to be injurious to them".<sup>68</sup> For this same reason girls were allowed sums of money for clothing when they were "sent to service", because it was thought likely to reduce the chance of them being recognised as from the workhouse. Thus a girl sent to service from Tenbury Wells Union in 1838<sup>69</sup> was allowed 16/4d to purchase clothing, but in spite of such care apprentices were sometimes neglected once they were with their master (or mistress). For instance in 1838<sup>70</sup> Tenbury Wells' Guardians demanded to know why some apprentices were not being supported by their masters, as one girl sent to service was returned to the workhouse having been unofficially rejected by the lady to whom she was sent. The Guardians successfully demanded that she be returned to her mistress. The pressure on Guardians to ensure that children were satisfactorily placed in apprenticeship or service was

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68. PERSHORE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25th. April 1837. P.R.O. MH12. 14104. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 1.

69. TENBURY WELLS BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. May 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14168. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 1.

70. TENBURY WELLS BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 31st. July 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14168. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 1st. and TENBURY WELLS BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. December 1838. P.R.O. MH12. 14168. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 409. Par. 1.

greater after the 1844 Act than previously, so that a request from farm labourers at Chaddesley Corbett in 1845 for two girls out of the workhouse, "to nurse their children"<sup>71</sup> during the harvest months was refused. Previously such a request would have been acceded to, but now a great deal more care was taken regarding the character and situation of potential masters. By 1846 the apprenticing of children from the workhouse was largely regularised, having the character and function envisaged by the Poor Law Inquiry Commission in 1834 by providing a sound base from which a pauper child could begin an independent life. Thus potential apprentice masters were vetted to ensure they were suitable individuals to receive apprentices, who were now medically inspected to ensure their capability to work. Thus the Medical Officer of Bromsgrove workhouse examined seven children in August 1846, proclaiming them "fit for apprenticing".<sup>72</sup> Sometimes, however, the medical officer certified children "infirm", so that a suitable apprenticeship for them could be ensured. For instance at Bromsgrove in 1847 a boy aged fourteen years with "a dislocation of the knee"<sup>73</sup> was given a premium of £6 -0 -0d and clothing to the value of £1 -0 -0d. Premiums paid with infirm apprentices were usually

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71. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. August 1845. P.R.O. MH12. 14018. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 6.

72. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 31st. August 1846, P.R.O. MH12. 13907. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 3.

73. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. March 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 13908. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 4.



greater than those for able-bodied apprentices, although medical inspection sometimes appeared a mere formality, with only a small unrepresentative minority of pauper children inspected declared unfit. Uniquely at Droitwich in 1847<sup>74</sup> the Medical Officer declared a boy aged eleven years old too weak to be apprenticed to a cordwainer, so that the apprenticeship was abandoned, although there must have been other similar children offered for apprenticeship and passed medically fit.

Children were sometimes apprenticed in their home union, but more often they were sent to industrial centres such as Birmingham and the Black Country where apprenticeship opportunities were more plentiful. Black Country places such as Bilston, Bloxwich, Darlaston, Dudley, Sedgley, Wednesbury, West Bromwich, and to some extent Wolverhampton offered mining apprenticeships, whilst Kidderminster took pauper apprentices in a variety of trades, but not carpet weaving. Glass making and glass cutting in the Brierley Hill area also attracted pauper apprentices. Boys continued to be sent to shoemakers and tailors, but such apprentices tended to be younger than other apprentices because these trades were regarded as not strenuous, so that young children could cope with the work.

Table 7.7 indicates the occupations to which pauper

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74. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 29th. September 1847. P.R.O. MH12. 13933. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 3.

TABLE 7.7.

Occupations of Parish Apprentices in Worcestershire 1834 to 1971.

OCCUPATION.	M	F	T	OCCUPATION.	M	F	T	OCCUPATION.	M	F	T
Agricultural Labourer.	6	0	6	Engraver.	1	0	1	Nurse.	0	7	7
Baker.	1	0	1	Ferule Maker.	1	0	1	Padlock Maker.	1	0	1
Barber.	1	0	1	File Cutter.	1	0	1	Pearl Button Maker.	1	0	1
Basketmaker.	3	0	3	File Striker.	1	0	1	Pupil Teacher.	1	0	1
Blacksmith.	5	1	6	Fish Hook Maker.	2	0	2	Rope Maker.	2	0	2
Boilermaker.	1	0	1	Fishing Tackle Maker.	1	0	1	Rule Maker.	1	0	1
Bonnetmaker.	0	0	1	Forgeman.	1	0	1	Saddler.	1	0	1
Brass and Iron Founder.	1	0	1	Foundryman.	1	0	1	Screw Maker.	1	0	1
Brazier.	1	0	1	Glassmaker.	1	0	1	Servant.	7	72	79
Bricklayer.	3	0	3	Grinder and Polisher.	1	0	1	Shoemaker.	34	0	34
Brickmaker.	8	0	8	Grocer.	2	0	2	Spectacle Maker.	2	0	2
Bridle-bit Maker.	1	0	1	Gun Lock Maker.	3	0	3	Spike Maker.	1	0	1
Builder.	2	0	2	Gunsmith.	1	0	1	Stonemason.	1	0	1
Butcher.	2	0	2	Gun Stock Maker.	4	0	4	Tailor.	11	0	11
Buttonmaker.	1	0	1	Hairdresser.	5	0	5	Tinman.	1	0	1
Carpet Weaver.	11	2	13	Hinge Maker.	4	0	4	Tobacco Pipe Maker.	1	0	1
Chainmaker.	16	0	16	Hosier.	1	0	1	Trapmaker.	1	0	1
Clogmaker.	1	0	1	Iron Roller.	1	0	1	Upholsterer.	1	0	1
Combmaker.	1	0	1	Latchmaker.	1	0	1	Watchmaker.	1	0	1
Coppersmith.	1	0	1	Lock Filer.	1	0	1	Wheelwright.	1	0	1
Cork Cutter.	1	0	1	Lock Maker.	2	0	2	Whitesmith.	1	0	1
Drawboy.	1	0	1	Maltmill Maker.	1	0	1	Woodturner.	1	0	1
Dressmaker.	0	1	1	Mattress Maker.	1	0	1				
Dyer.	1	0	1	Miner.	91	0	91	No Description.	54	9	63
Engine and Boiler Maker.	2	0	2	Nailer.	5	0	5				
Engineer.	2	0	2	Needlescourer.	2	0	2	Total	345	93	438

SOURCE: Worcestershire Boards of Guardians' Minute Books 1834 to 1871.

children were apprenticed between 1837 and 1871. There were three hundred and forty four boys and ninety three girls apprenticed, a smaller number per year on average than in the period 1781 to 1834, but more importantly the nature of apprenticeship had altered. Where previously outdoor pauper children were apprenticed, now those apprenticed were almost exclusively indoor paupers and there were significant differences between the trades to which children were now apprenticed. The major change regarding the apprenticing of boys occurred in rural places, where apprenticing to agricultural labour was now much less common, probably because work for boys on the land was now found without the need to apprentice them. Generally boys were now apprenticed to trades with increased skill levels, although eleven boys were still sent to carpet weavers, probably to be employed as drawboys setting up the carpet looms, which was unskilled work, whereas most workers in the carpet trade were highly skilled. These skilled workers were recruited by "internal recruitment" from families already employed in the trade. Most pauper carpet weaving apprentices came from Worcester Union, but such apprenticeships ceased after 1847, as indicated earlier, when carpet weavers were declared unsuitable masters. Likewise little or no skill was taught to boys sent to the coal and mineral mining industries based in the Black Country, but in spite of this ninety one boys were sent there between 1837 and 1871, mainly from Bromsgrove and Droitwich Unions. Skilled occupations attracted most of the remaining male apprentices.

Of ninety three girls apprenticed between 1837 and 1871, seventy two were to domestic service, whilst there were nine girls with "no description" entered on their indentures, who probably also became domestic servants. However, given the employment market for females in the nineteenth century these low skill levels were no surprise. Table 7.8 investigates domestic service apprenticeships in Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Kidderminster King's Norton and Pershore where between 75% and 91% of girls apprenticed were as domestic servants. Whilst Droitwich and Pershore Unions apprenticed a larger percentage of girls to

TABLE 7.8.

The Percentage of Housewifery and Service Apprenticeships in various Worcestershire Poor Law Unions 1834 to 1871.

UNION	PERCENTAGE.
BROMSGROVE	75
DROITWICH	90
KIDDERMINSTER	79
KING'S NORTON	81
PERSHORE	91

SOURCE: Worcestershire Boards of Guardians' Minute Books 1834 to 1871.

household work than did the three other unions investigated, this was probably explained by the fact that unskilled female employment was more easily available in urban unions close to the Black Country and to Birmingham. There was thus less need to apprentice girls in these urban unions.

Some unions sent children further afield to be apprenticed than others, with the geographical location of the union and its nature appearing important in determining this. Thus Bromsgrove and Kidderminster Unions, which were conveniently placed to send children to the Black Country, and King's Norton Union contiguous with the fast developing industrial town of Birmingham, easily apprenticed many pauper children. But even in these large urban unions the supply of suitable apprenticeships was sometimes scarce. Thus Guardians sometimes had to advertise for suitable masters. King's Norton first advertised in 1856,<sup>75</sup> when three apprenticings for boys resulted and they advertised again in 1862, stating that the Guardians "would be pleased to hear of places for them (girls of thirteen to fifteen years old) and would permit a reasonable trial for respectable applicants".<sup>76</sup> No girls were apprenticed on this occasion, however. Another attempt was made in 1868 when two advertisements were placed announcing that girls were "available for service".<sup>77</sup> On this occasion local clergymen were asked to vouch for the respectability of all applicants and girls fit for

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75. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. August 1856, P.R.O. MH12. 14043. BPL. Fl.

76. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. January 1862. P.R.O. MH12. 14044. BPL. Fl.

77. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 18th. March 1868. P.R.O. MH12. 14045. BPL. Fl.

service were listed by the Medical Officer. Four girls were sent to service, a success that caused the same union to advertise again in 1870.<sup>78</sup> Droitwich Union unsuccessfully tried advertising for apprenticeship places at about this time,<sup>79</sup> but most other unions did not bother to advertise, because they found sufficient places for apprentices and servants, or because they considered it not worthwhile. Sometimes enquiries for apprentices and servants came from neighbouring unions, with potential masters considering a distance between the apprentice and his home union desirable, but most Guardians wanted this anyway, because they ensured resettlement of the child at the end of its apprenticeship by doing this. When a Worcester hairdresser asked Droitwich Guardians for a suitable apprentice in 1848 he was allowed one immediately,<sup>80</sup> as was a chemist and druggist from Darlaston who asked the same union for an apprentice in 1854.<sup>81</sup> In 1869 Baldwin and Co., Ironfounders of Stourport, were willing to take a number of boys over twelve years old from

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78. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. November 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 14045. BPL. Fl.

79. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. November 1870. 24th. November 1870 P.R.O. MH12. 13941. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 13.

80. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. December 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 13941. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 13.

81. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. January 1848. P.R.O. MH12. 13933. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 4.

Kidderminster workhouse, "giving them employment coupled with careful oversight under competent workmen",<sup>82</sup> an offer that was accepted so that two boys were sent on two months' trial and eventually apprenticed.<sup>83</sup>

Table 7.9 investigates the distance migrated by pauper apprentices. Of three hundred and forty six male pauper apprentices two hundred and fifty three (73.1%)

TABLE 7.9.

Distances Migrated by Male and Female Parish Apprentices  
1836 to 1871.

DISTANCE.	NUMBER.		
	Male.	Female.	Total.
0-5 miles.	86	56	142
6-10 miles.	46	5	51
11-15 miles.	38	3	41
16-20 miles.	62	1	63
21-25 miles.	15	0	15
26-30 miles.	2	0	2
31-35 miles.	1	0	1
36-40 miles.	0	0	0
Over 40 miles.	3	2	5
TOTAL.	253	67	320
Average (Miles).	9.80	5.15	8.83

SOURCE: Worcestershire Boards of Guardians' Minute  
Books 1834 to 1871

82. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. October 1854. P.R.O. MH12. 13935. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 6.

83. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 11st. May 1869. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 19.

moved away from their parish of origin, thus altering their settlement. The average distance migrated by these boys was 9.8 miles. Out of ninety one females, sixty seven (76.3%) moved from their place of birth an average distance of 5.15 miles, which contrasted with the period from 1781 to 1834 when fewer apprentices migrated shorter distances. Then, however, an apprentice only had to move out of its parish of birth to alter its settlement, now they had to move out of their union of birth, which involved moving greater distances. The percentages of males and females migrating to be apprenticed were similar, but the average distance migrated by males was greater than that for females, possibly indicating the relative ease with which girls were found work. They simply did not have to migrate as far to find suitable situations. In rural unions, however, the problems of child pauperism had been less severe and apprenticing thus became less common.

Table 7.10 investigates the distances migrated by children apprenticed from unions apprenticing more than one hundred children each in the period 1837 to 1871. Generally fewer females than males migrated from their birthplaces when apprenticed, reflecting again the relative ease with which apprenticeships for girls could be obtained, again the girls moved shorter average distances. Those unions furthest from the industrial centres of the Black Country and Birmingham had to send their apprentices greater distances to obtain employment



than did the less isolated unions. However, few children were sent over thirty miles from their birthplace, because to do this invoked special inspection arrangements under the 1845 Regulations, which Boards of Guardians generally wanted to avoid doing.

An Act of Parliament in 1851<sup>84</sup> enabled Guardians to

TABLE 7.10.

Distances Migrated by Male and Female Parish Apprentices in various Worcestershire Poor Law Unions 1836 to 1871.

UNION.

DISTANCE.	BROMSGROVE			DROITWICH			K 'MINSTER			K 'NORTON		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
0-5 miles.	10	2	12	14	7	21	30	10	40	31	25	56
6-10 miles.	5	0	5	3	0	3	11	2	13	17	3	20
11-15 miles.	23	0	23	1	0	1	8	2	10	7	1	8
16-20 miles.	38	1	39	5	0	5	24	0	24	0	0	0
21-25 miles.	2	0	2	16	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0
26-30 miles.	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
31-35 miles.	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
36-40 miles.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Over 40 miles.	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL.	82	3	85	33	14	47	75	15	90	55	29	84
Average (Miles).	13.3	8.3	13.1	15.1	4.0	10.7	9.7	6.9	9.2	6.7	3.4	5.6

SOURCE: Poor Law Boards of Guardians' Minute Books 1834 to 1871 for Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Kidderminster and King's Norton Unions.

claim expenses for sending a Relieving Officer to report on pauper children apprenticed up to five miles from their home union. Those apprentices more than five miles away were now inspected by the Relieving Officer of the union who accepted the apprentice. He reported to the apprentice's home union, which was thought to safeguard the accepting union as well as the apprentice. Thus King's Norton inspected a boy from Warwick Union who had been apprenticed to a man in Northfield in 1854.<sup>85</sup> He was visited by the Relieving Officer who reported satisfactorily to Warwick Guardians as well as to his own Board of Guardians. Generally such apprentices were satisfactory and this led King's Norton Guardians to report in 1870 "their (the apprentices') employers have scarcely a fault to find with their general behaviour and habits of industry".<sup>86</sup> The employer's perception was considered most important, with the opinion of the Relieving Officers seldom stated, whilst that of the child was never considered in spite of regulations produced after the Act in 1851<sup>87</sup> requiring that this be done. Occasionally adverse reports were made, as when George Smith of Blockley in Shipston-on-Stour Union took twelve girls from the Bristol Union workhouse in 1859<sup>88</sup> to train as silk throwsters. Instead of apprenticing them he took them under contract, a scheme approximating

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85. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 22nd. March 1854. P.R.O. MH12. 14042. BPL. Fl.

86. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 6th. July 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 14045. BPL. Fl.

87. 14 & 15 Vict. c.11 Op cit.

88. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. February 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14121.

to "batch apprenticing" and the local Guardians objected to this. Their Chairman, Lord Rederdale, instituted an inquiry and made a personal visit to the Poor Law Board in London to discuss the matter,<sup>89</sup> probably intending to use his influence there. However, all that happened was that Assistant Poor Law Commissioner J.T. Graves was sent to investigate the way in which the girls were treated and housed. He found the lodgings, bedding, clothing and food of the girls satisfactory, but he was worried about the religious education offered. One Roman Catholic girl had been sent to Anglican services whilst in the workhouse and to the local Baptist Church by the silk manufacturer, thus a charge of proselytism could be levelled equally at the workhouse administrators and at the apprentice master. J.T. Graves insisted, however, that generally great care had been taken over religious instruction. He considered the girls equipped to do well, being able to earn wages of five shillings a week at the end of their agreement, just sufficient for a single woman to subsist on. He stated that the Poor Law Board could be assured that<sup>90</sup> "there are no temptations, and that prostitution does not exist in the town", so that they could be satisfied about employment arrangements. Lord Rederdale's influence was clearly insufficient to take this matter further, whereas a more

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89. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. March 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14121.

90. SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 7th. November 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14121.

influential contemporary might have been able to do so. The matter was allowed to rest. At least Rederdale had obtained a hearing for his complaint. Some warnings about the possible outcome of apprenticeships were even less influential, however, as when Bromsgrove Guardians wanted to send a boy as an apprentice to a hairdresser in Birmingham in 1867, but the Birmingham Guardians drew attention to the fact that the master; "Carried on trade on a Sunday".<sup>91</sup> Bromsgrove Guardians were undaunted and proceeded with the apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships were sometimes unsuccessful, so that a master returned an apprentice or servant who proved unsatisfactory. At Droitwich in 1840<sup>92</sup> a girl servant was returned to the workhouse for dishonesty and when the Guardians wrote to the Poor Law Commission for advice as to how this girl might be punished, it was suggested that the girl, aged fourteen years old, be placed in the adult women's ward, so that she would not taint other girls.<sup>93</sup> However, the Guardians found this punishment unacceptable which illustrated well the nature of the relationship that had evolved between central and local Poor Law administrations. The Central

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91. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. July 1867. P.R.O. MH12. 13913. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 6.

92. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. April 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 13931. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 2.

93. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 15th. April 1840. P.R.O. MH12. 13931. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 2.

Poor Law Authority was regarded as an advisory body and their advice sometimes caused resentment. Thus Worcester Guardians sent a resolution to the poor law Commission in 1841, stating that "the powers of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner relative to parish apprenticeship would be more suitably left to the discretion of the Guardians".<sup>94</sup> This situation persisted, so that R.Weale's writing of unofficial local apprenticeship regulations caused some resentment, but still his rules were adhered to. But the situation did improve as greater agreement developed between local and central Poor Law administrations regarding apprenticeship. By 1871 there was a concordance between these two groups regarding pauper apprenticeship. Some children refused to work once they were apprenticed. An outdoor pauper child, from Stourbridge, apprenticed at his father's request, to an engineer at Brierley Hill,<sup>95</sup> refused to work and conducted himself badly, so that the Guardians cancelled his indentures and he was returned to the workhouse.

However, King's Norton Guardians, in 1863,<sup>96</sup> refused to do this, because as they pointed out to the master, he

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94. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 12th. March 1841, P.R.O. MH12. 14203.

95. STOURBRIDGE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 9th. April 1856, P.R.O. MH12. 14141.

96. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 25. February 1863. P.R.O. MH12. 14044. BPL. Fl.

could summons his apprentice before the magistrates and force him to work. They gave similar advice again in 1864.<sup>97</sup> Elsewhere apprentices were returned to the workhouse having been convicted of criminal offences. At Bromsgrove in 1852<sup>98</sup> the indentures of a button maker's apprentice were cancelled, after four months, when he was found guilty of theft and was sent to prison for ten days. Similarly at Kidderminster in 1854<sup>99</sup> another boy was returned to the workhouse for dishonesty. In other cases a longer period elapsed before a criminal offence was committed. Thus a boy apprenticed by Droitwich Union in 1857<sup>100</sup> was convicted of stealing from his master and was imprisoned with his indentures cancelled although seven years of his apprenticeship had elapsed.<sup>101</sup> He was returned to the workhouse on his release from prison and later he refused to be apprenticed again.<sup>102</sup> Servants were sometimes returned to the workhouse for indiscipline, as in 1858<sup>103</sup> when a baker brought his

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97. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 13th. January 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 14044. BPL. Fl.

98. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. June 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

99. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 26th. September 1854. P.R.O. MH12. 14021. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 10.

100. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 4th. November 1857. P.R.O. MH12. 13936. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 8.

101. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. October 1864. P.R.O. MH12. 13939. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

102. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 17th. June 1865. P.R.O. MH12. 13939. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 10.

103. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 1st. November 1858. P.R.O. MH12. 14043. BPL. Fl.

servant back to King's Norton Guardians demanding she be disciplined. He said he was unable to keep her owing to her "misconduct" (the word dishonesty had been scored out in the minutes), so that her apprenticeship was cancelled and she was readmitted to the workhouse.

Sometimes apprentices complained about their masters, as when a shoemaker's apprentice at Bromsgrove in 1851,<sup>104</sup> complained about not being taught to make shoes, merely to repair them. His master appeared before the Guardians and produced a pair of shoes made by the boy, which caused the Guardians to express their satisfaction with the training given, but the boy now alleged that he had not been given clothes promised to him when he was apprenticed. The master retorted that the boy's parents had offered to supply clothes, but this was contrary to the Guardians' recollection and they demanded that the master supply his apprentice with clothes. Occasionally pauper children refused to be apprenticed. At King's Norton in 1851<sup>105</sup> a girl refused to go as a domestic servant to a man in Northfield. The Guardians punished her for this, but elsewhere a boy from Bromsgrove refused to be apprenticed to a miner at Darlaston in 1853, because "he had objections to coal pits, and would not work in them".<sup>106</sup>

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104. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 23rd. April 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 13909. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

105. KING'S NORTON BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 24th. September 1851. P.R.O. MH12. 14042. BPL. Fl.

106. BROMSGROVE BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 29th. June 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 13910. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 400. Par. 5.

Cases of maltreatment of apprentices and servants were worrying to both the Guardians and the Central Administration. At Droitwich in 1852<sup>107</sup> a girl was sent as a servant to a woman in Barborne Lane, Worcester, but after a short time she returned to the workhouse complaining about being ill treated. Her mistress was fined £2-11 -0d for unlawful assault. However, not all cases were regarded as seriously as this. At Droitwich in 1853 a man who "treated an apprentice in a harsh and improper manner", was not prosecuted, instead he was told to "use all correction in future more modestly" and his apprentice was advised to be "more industrious in future and more obedient".<sup>108</sup> There was only one case of severe maltreatment of an apprentice in the county between 1837 and 1871, at Cleobury Mortimer in 1861,<sup>109</sup> where a girl from Kidderminster workhouse, who was originally sent as a servant to Chaddesley Corbett in 1859,<sup>110</sup> had moved with the agreement of the Kidderminster Guardians. The girl returned to Kidderminster Workhouse in 1861 in "a deplorable state, suffering from ill usage to a considerable extent....the poor girl had been shamefully and cruelly treated [and

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107. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 28th. July 1852. P.R.O. MH12. 13935. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 5.

108. DROITWICH BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, December 1853. P.R.O. MH12. 13935. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 401. Par. 6.

109. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 8th. January 1861. P.R.O. MH12. 14023. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 13.

110. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 5th. April 1859. P.R.O. MH12. 14022. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 12.



was in] a most emaciated and wretched state". The mistress and her husband were prosecuted at Shrewsbury Crown Court. The husband was found not guilty, but his wife was found guilty of ill-treating the girl and was sentenced to six months imprisonment. The costs of the case (£23-10 -0d) were paid by Cleobury Mortimer Guardians, who were reimbursed by Kidderminster Guardians. In 1870 Kidderminster Guardians investigated the complaints of a boy who said he was being overworked and ill treated,<sup>111</sup> but whilst the Guardians found some cause for his complaints, these were insufficient to prosecute the master. Instead they released the boy from his apprenticeship agreement.

The situation of apprentices improved during the period 1834 to 1871 as conditions became more regulated. As both the Central Authority and local Boards of Guardians investigated complaints about ill-treatment, with gross cases being brought before the courts, there was apparently an effort made to ensure equitable treatment for all pauper apprentices, so that common attitudes towards apprenticeship. Rules and regulations produced in 1844 and 1845<sup>112</sup> began this process by legitimating the good practises instigated by Mr. R. Weale's temporary regulations,<sup>113</sup> which had undoubtedly

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111. KIDDERMINSTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 2nd. November 1870. P.R.O. MH12. 14024. W.C.R.O. Loc. b251. Acc. 403. Par. 20.

112. PLC Order, 25th. January 1845. in PLC 11th. Annual Report, PRO. ZHC1. 1551. Op cit.

113. WORCESTER BOARD OF GUARDIANS, Minutes, 19th. October 1839. Op cit.

influenced the Commission in formulating their own rules in 1845. There were some innovations in these, however. For instance medical inspection was introduced, as were the educational clauses demanding apprentices be able to read and write their own name unaided before being eligible to be apprenticed. However, the most influential of all the innovations was that specifying the "Duties of the Master". When prior to 1845 apprentices were treated badly they were seldom removed from their masters. Thus Guardians had been relatively ineffective in dealing with such situations, but now apprentices were invariably withdrawn from their apprenticeship with their indentures cancelled. They were thus removed from any potential danger. Apprentices' living conditions were also better regulated and it was ensured that their wages were paid regularly. Relieving Officers did this by diligently monitoring such conditions. The apprentice's rights to religious freedom and to education (albeit on a Sunday) were also reinforced by this means. Whilst the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act had been beneficial to parish apprentices, outlawing the allotment system of apprenticing, the 1844 Act and the regulations that followed it in 1845, were even more effective in improving matters. The Act and regulations that resulted from it remained in force until after 1871, because the Central Administration found it unnecessary to issue many amending orders and regulations between 1845 and

1871, instead they relied on the enforcement of existing rules and regulations by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners aided by the Union Relieving Officers.

These officials' diligence ensured that conditions for pauper apprentices improved drastically. The attitude of the Central Authority towards pauper apprenticing also altered radically between 1834 and 1844. Where initially there was a refusal to encourage such apprenticeship, this was replaced by a period of reluctant acceptance of apprenticeship, around the time of the creation of the Poor Law Board in 1847, when the first regulations for apprenticing were written. Gradually this was replaced by an acceptance of the apprenticeship system that was now thought to aid workhouse children in getting a start in life, thus enabling them to avoid lifelong pauperism. Whilst pauper apprentices gained in employment prospects one might argue that this was at the expense of the children of the independent poor in apparent contravention of the "Principle of Less Eligibility".

In conclusion, it was apparent that the orthodoxy of the Central Poor Law Authority towards apprenticeship and its adherence to the utilitarian principles on which the administration of poor relief was based were eroded. However, this was probably inevitable given the nature of the problem posed to Boards of Guardians, particularly in urban unions by the large numbers of destitute children alone in the workhouses. Urban unions

came to use pauper apprenticeship as a solution to these problems. Whilst the Poor Law-Board after 1847 initially tacitly sanctioned apprenticeship, it eventually came to actively support its use, with a changed attitude coinciding with the demise of the influence of utilitarian idealogues around Chadwick at the Central Poor Law Authority. Between about 1850 and 1871 apprenticeship rates settled at a constant level. Whilst one might argue that it was functional for unions to rid themselves of the problems posed by such children, it became apparent that most Guardians used apprenticeship with more care and humanity than previously, so that children were placed in appropriate positions and increasingly their conditions were monitored. The "Principle of Less Eligibility" was eroded and eventually ignored, so that the administration of apprenticeship became pragmatic, which also meant that any notion of uniformity of treatment in this aspect of Poor Law administration was impossible. Apprenticeship and service had utility not only to the Poor Law Unions, but increasingly its usefulness to the child was also recognised. It can be seen as one element in the "rescue" of permanent child pauper inmates from lifelong pauperism. Whilst this threat was seen to be endemic in workhouses this laudable aim was supported by Poor Law administrators and public alike.

The distinction between rural and urban unions was again apparent. After 1834 rural unions virtually ceased

apprenticeships, whereas prior to the Poor Law Amendment Act<sup>114</sup> they had apprenticed large numbers of parish poor children using the now discredited and illegal allotment system of apprenticing. Urban Unions continued to apprentice children although at a lower rate than previously. The attempt, suggested by Duke,<sup>115</sup> to supplant apprenticeship by education as a means of solving the problem caused by the pauper child must therefore have been partly successful, but again this conclusion can only be reached from a local study using the "biased" Board of Guardians' Minute Books rejected by Ross in the introduction to his thesis.<sup>116</sup> Obviously apprenticeship continued to provide the only legitimate escape from the workhouse for the deserted or orphaned destitute child, for whom the alternative was "life-long pauperism" and continued residence in the workhouse, the very eventuality the New Poor Law was intended to avoid. For transient child inmates apprenticeship was seldom available.

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114. 4 & 5 Will. IV c.76.

115. DUKE, F., "Pauper Education", in FRASER, D. (ed.), The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century, Macmillan, 1976, p.68.

116. ROSS, A.M., "The Care and Education of Pauper Children in England and Wales 1834 to 1896", Unpublished Ph.D. University of London, 1955.

### CONCLUSIONS.

This study of the condition and treatment of indoor pauper children in the thirteen Worcestershire Poor Law Unions, between 1834 and 1871, adds to the stock of studies of the New Poor Law. There have been over thirty such studies produced during the last four decades. These studies fall into two distinct categories: social histories and administrative histories, with the methodology employed by the historian largely determining the nature of the outcome of the research. Social histories of the New Poor Law are written using local sources, such as Boards of Guardians' Minute Books, whilst administrative histories of the New Poor Law use Central Poor Law Administration sources, such as printed annual reports or the quarterly reports presented by Poor Law Inspectors. This study used Boards of Guardians' Minute Books as its prime source, which were then elucidated, where necessary, from Central Administration papers such as Orders and Circulars. It is thus a piece of social history intended to describe the conditions endured by the largest group of all indoor paupers - the children. Social histories of the New Poor Law tend also to relate to a specific geographical locality and are thus also local histories. Administrative histories, on the other hand, relate to the national scene, although typically they illustrate points of procedure by reference to local documents, such as Guardians' Minute Books.

Social history studies of the New Poor Law, such as those by Digby,<sup>1</sup> on Norfolk, or by Gibson,<sup>2</sup> on Surrey, provide useful comparisons with this study, particularly as they relate to counties. Studies relating to towns or cities, such as Ashforth's study<sup>3</sup> of Bradford or Shaw's study<sup>4</sup> of Norwich also proved useful. These works related to all categories of pauper, but included children. The study by McKay,<sup>5</sup> of the treatment of child paupers in Gloucestershire, and by O'Brien,<sup>6</sup> of their treatment in Lancashire, were also useful for comparison. These too were clearly social histories. The study by McKinnon<sup>7</sup> investigated the national administration of the New Poor Law, whilst that of Ross,<sup>8</sup> and more recently Obermann,<sup>9</sup> studied the national administration of the law

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1. DIGBY, A., "The Operation of the New Poor Law - Social and Economic Life in Nineteenth Century Norfolk". Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of East Anglia, 1971 - the basis of Pauper Palaces, R.K.P., 1978.

2. GIBSON, M., "The Treatment of the Poor in Surrey Under the New Poor Law Between 1834 and 1871", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Surrey, 1978-9.

3. ASHFORTH, D., "The Poor in Bradford c 1834-1871", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bradford, 1979.

4. SHAW, L.M., "Aspects of Poor Relief in Norwich' 1825-1875", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of East Anglia, 1980.

5. MCKAY, P.W., "Education Under the Poor Law in Gloucestershire 1834-1909", Unpublished M.Ed Dissertation, University of Bristol, 1983.

6. O'BRIEN, T., "The Education and Care of Workhouse Children in Some Lancashire Poor Law Unions 1834 to 1930", Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Manchester, 1976.

7. MCKINNON, M.E., "Poverty and Policy: the English Poor Law 1860-1910", Unpublished D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1984.

8. ROSS, A.M., "The Care and Education of Pauper Children in England and Wales 1834 to 1896", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1955.

9. OBERMANN, S.P., "The Education in Poor Law Institutions in England and Wales During the Period 1834 to 1870", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1982.

relating to child paupers. These were administrative histories, as were Dickens's study<sup>10</sup> of workhouse architecture and Mishra's study<sup>11</sup> of the office of union relieving officer.

It is possible to identify nine areas in which this study contributes to our knowledge of the New Poor Law:

- i. Methodological considerations.
- ii. Two Poor Laws: Rural and Urban.
- iii. The New Poor Law as "social control".
- iv. "Less Eligibility": Its applicability.
- v. "National Uniformity": An impossible ideal.
- vi. The theory and practice of the workhouse.
- vii. The workhouse as a total institution.
- viii. The New Poor Law as a developing bureaucracy.
- ix. The New Poor Law: An imposed morality.

These areas were to be found in all facets of the treatment of pauper child inmates in Worcestershire Poor Law unions between 1834 and 1871. For logical reasons, the bulk of this study has been organised to consider treatment, medical treatment, education and training, although all facets of treatment afforded to inmate children were related to the areas listed above. This conclusion attempts a synoptic appraisal in relation to these areas of the treatment of such children.

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10. DICKENS, A.M., *Architects and the Union Workhouse of the New Poor Law*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, C.N.A.A., 1983.

11. MISHRA, R.C., *"The History of the Relieving Officer in England and Wales 1834 to 1948"*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London (L.S.E.), 1968.



### **i. Methodological Considerations.**

Ross<sup>12</sup> was clearly mindful of the methodological distinction between the two categories of Poor Law history in the preamble to his study. He specifically rejected Boards of Guardians' Minutes as biased sources, choosing instead what he regarded as objective sources; the Central Administration's Annual Reports. These were produced by the Poor Law Commission (and after 1847 the Poor Law Board) and consisted of collations of material produced during the year, including copies of all administrative orders and circulars, inspectors reports and detailed reports of specific incidents occurring in various Poor Law unions. It would thus be possible to argue that these documents were biased, perhaps even consistently biased. This was not the case with locally generated minutes. These varied from Union to Union, and indeed from time to time, as the membership of Boards of Guardians altered. Whilst the consistency of national papers lent themselves to Ross's purpose, his criticism of local sources was an over statement, for the very bias that Ross objected to was important in this study. A major aim of this present study of Worcestershire was to describe in detail the life of a child inmate in Worcestershire between 1834 and 1871. Administrative literature published with the particular purpose of informing and convincing Parliamentarians and others of the smooth running of the Poor Law machine was not

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12. ROSS. Op. cit. Introduction.

useful in achieving the prime aim of this study. Whilst recognising that the Board of Guardians' Minutes will have been the edited version of happenings in the workhouse, together with the Guardians' opinions on those events, it was likely that they were a more realistic view than the expurgated version offered by national Poor Law papers, which had been passed through a filter of orthodoxy within Somerset House, the headquarters of the Central Administration. The present study was thus a local social history of the New Poor Law in Worcestershire.

**ii. Two Poor Laws: Rural and Urban.**

Implicit in many studies, and in literature about the history of the New Poor Law, was a belief in the existence of a rural and an urban version of the law. Whilst this was a useful device in this study for contrasting, Tenbury Wells Union, the most rural Worcestershire union, with Dudley, the most urban one, these places were extremes. In fact there was a continuum of unions arrayed between these extremes according to their rurality (or urbanity). In turn this was related not only to the size of population of the union, but also to population density. As suggested in nineteenth century literature, it was urban, industrialised and hence densely populated areas that were threatening to the middle and upper classes, because of the social problems that were found there. Whilst this was a cause for concern to the social elite it was not a cause for concern to Poor Law institutions.

They simply provided workhouse facilities, whatever the nature of paupers using them. It was the numbers of paupers in the workhouses that created problems. This was particularly the case for inmate children, a large proportion of whom were permanently in the workhouse. Whilst not denying that the cause of an individual seeking relief in an urban union was different to that in a rural place, the nature of the pauper's needs and the relief given did not vary. Indeed, the "Principle of National Uniformity" was intended to preclude such variation. Essentially, therefore, variations in the treatment received by indoor child paupers was explicable in terms of the size of the problem, with the size of population likely to become pauperised the most important element. The urban or rural nature of the union was in some senses unimportant.

Within broad bounds, the treatment provided in the county Poor Law union with the largest indoor child pauper population was similar to that provided where there were the smallest numbers of pauper children. Within the county there were, however, difficulties relating to finance that clouded this issue. Larger unions spent more on officers' salaries, whilst Central Administration Rules and Regulations specifically precluded the appointment of some types of officer in small unions. For instance, industrial training was provided in all unions, but it was only in larger unions that a specific officer responsible for such training was appointed. The provision of nursing staff was also

similarly influenced. Whilst all unions provided the same range of services to pauper inmates it depended on the size of union how these services were organised. In this circumstance there was an inevitable variation between large and small unions within the county. The division of the Poor Law into urban and rural sectors is therefore inappropriate, rather there was a continuum of treatment of pauper children that appeared to be related to the amount of usage of workhouse facilities, rather than to the urban or rural nature of the union.

### iii. The New Poor Law as "social control".

The Poor Law continued to be a social control measure, with local Poor Law officials acting as "social police", as described by Donajgrodski.<sup>13</sup> What certainly differed was the local inhabitants' perception of whether the destitute (or near mendicant) poor were threatening, although the evidence amassed in this study does not suggest that within the county the poor were seen as threatening. This was apparent from Guardians' minute books, which contained no indication of such a threat and this was in stark contrast to Metropolitan and other large urban areas, where the destitute poor were certainly seen as threatening. Within the county, there appeared to be an acceptance that workhouses must be provided, although some unions were slow in forming and some areas were without a workhouse for up to three years after 1834.

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13. A concept developed by DONAJGRODSKI, A.P. in his article "'Social Police' and the Bureaucratic Elite: A Vision of Order in the Age of Reform" in DONAJGRODSKI, A.P. (ed.), Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain Croom Helm, 1977, pp. 51-77.

The different dates of the formation of unions also indicated the relative enthusiasm of the inhabitants of a locality for the new Law. However, there was no pattern to this and thus some rural as well as urban unions were slow to form. Setting up a local Poor Law union and opening a workhouse was a procedure prescribed by Statute and circumscribed by rules and regulations from the outset. The Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, initially employed because of their orthodoxy towards the utilitarian ideology of the New Poor Law, had oversight of the creation of unions and the setting up of workhouses. All union workhouses were set up to conform to the same rules and regulations and all were uniformly staffed according to the Central Authority's edicts regarding staff:pauper ratios. The staff were also remunerated according to fixed salary scales that were unattractive given the privations implicit in their workhouse life. The implication of this was that the Poor Law was a "social control" mechanism, although the nature of the threat posed by destitute individuals determined how overt this mechanism was.

#### **iv. "Less Eligibility": Its applicability.**

The "Principle of Less Eligibility", a major tenet of the New Poor Law, was the product of Bentham's utilitarian ideas in Pauper Management Improved published in 1785. This suggested that there should be a "workhouse test" in which the destitute should make a conscious decision to enter the workhouse, thus accepting the privations implied. The workhouse was to be an environment that was not attractive to potential inmates. The conditions

there were to be no better than the conditions enjoyed (or more properly endured) by the lowest level of independent labourer outside the workhouse. Given that the condition of this class was parlous, resulting in their homes invariably being squalid, their diet wholly inadequate and their health, at best, indifferent, this was difficult. This situation was worsened by an insistence that the treatment of inmates should be humane, that they be kept in sanitary conditions, fed an adequate, if monotonous diet, and that their conditions be well regulated. Thus the two requirements of "Less Eligibility" and effective humane regulated conditions were at first sight contradictory.

Inevitably, education and training were soon used as a solution to coping with the problems created by workhouse children and eventually the Poor Law Central Authority began to demand that such education be provided. They then prescribed its type, but the different nature of the unions began to cause problems. Generally, rural unions were more resistant to demands for thorough intellectual, industrial and moral training than were urban ones. The case of Martley Union's resistance to teaching writing, between 1839 and 1848, was the most extreme case of such resistance, both locally and nationally. Problems stemmed from the nature of rural Guardians, who tended to be elected by farmers and rural craftsmen, who saw little use in the education

offered. They saw it as infringing the "Principle of Less Eligibility". On the other hand, urban Guardians saw the education offered as having utility for them, as they were the employers of labour, and contemporaneously the virtues of a trained and educated workforce was emerging. They saw workhouse education as beneficial to child paupers and were quite willing to accept less rigid definitions of "Less Eligibility". Guardians in intermediate places, that were neither rural nor urban, such as Pershore, where the Boards of Guardians were drawn from both rural and urban parishes, disagreed. The Guardians representing urban parishes, within Pershore Union, differed profoundly in their opinions from those representing rural places. The resolution of this favoured the rural Guardians, who were in a slight majority on the Board. Education in union workhouses thus often differed because of variations of the dominant ideology of the Board of Guardians. Any notion of uniformity of treatment between unions must therefore be questioned, particularly when the financing of the Poor Law is considered, because unions with a small potential pauper population had less rate support. The New Poor Law initially rigidly maintained "Less Eligibility" for all classes of pauper, including children, although within ten years changed attitudes towards the culpability of child inmates for their plight, meant that "Less Eligibility" was rejected as a principle for the treatment of child paupers.

**v. "National Uniformity": An impossible ideal.**

"National Uniformity", another major tenet of the New Poor Law, was thus to be ensured by adherence to rigid regulations, but because the size of the potentially pauperised population varied this did not imply uniformity of treatment. The greatest problems with inmate children in county unions arose when large numbers of children were crowded into the workhouses. By 1840 it was apparent that in excess of one-third of all county workhouse inmates were children (those under sixteen years old). This problem was exacerbated because children were in the workhouse for the longest period of any pauper, theoretically, in some cases for up to sixteen years. Children, although not specifically mentioned in the Poor Law Amendment Act were present in the county's workhouses from the outset. It was inevitable, given that the traditional means of ridding parishes of destitute and orphaned children, that of apprenticeship, was now officially disapproved of and had ceased.

"National Uniformity" was initially a simplistic concept. It presumed common treatment of all pauper classes, although as suggested, the needs of many classes of pauper differed considerably from those for whom the workhouse regime had originally been designed. The workhouse was, however, a wholly segregated place, with all inmates meeting only at meal times, when they were assiduously controlled. In this circumstance, to



talk of a unitary "total institution" was misleading, rather the workhouse was an agglomeration of several different "total institutions", each with a different purpose. The childrens' wards could thus operate in a different way from adult and aged persons' wards without infringing the "Principle of National Uniformity". In fact the principle could be said to be maintained between similar wards in workhouses nationally. The earliest rules and regulations produced were intended to be applied universally, but gradually specific rules relating to the conduct of specific classes of pauper evolved. After 1847 there were few rules and regulations that applied across the whole spectrum of all paupers. The exceptions to this related to such matters as admission and discharge procedures.

For this reason the apparent violation of the "Principle of Less Eligibility", according to its strict utilitarian definition, can be explained. The creation of the Poor Law Board, to replace the Poor Law Commission in 1847 was a watershed, because before this date there was relatively strict adherence to the Principles, yet later differential treatment of the various classes of pauper in their separate workhouse departments was officially countenanced. Thus, there was indeed an attempt to programme the workhouse child, so that it did not become a lifelong pauper and the findings of this study suggest that the workhouse was relatively effective in doing this.

Initially, soon after 1834, unions attempted to provide an illusion of equal treatment, although after 1847 this pretence was dropped. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the treatment of child paupers, who, together with the aged, were treated as special cases. This probably happened unofficially within the first two or three years of the introduction of the New Poor Law, although this was masked from the Central Authority until after 1847. To some extent the demise of Chadwick's influence, towards the end of the 1830's, allowed freer interpretation of rules and regulations, but rigidities within the administrative structure of the Poor Law Commission caused old attitudes to prevail. "National Uniformity" as a principle of Poor Relief was probably inappropriate from the outset. It proved unworkable within Worcestershire and was rejected, in most places, by 1847.

#### **vi. The theory and practice of the workhouse.**

The New Poor Law was seen as essentially preventative, intended to rescue children from lifelong pauperism, although they continued to be considered as "tainted stock" both on the grounds of their parentage and their experience. In the county, they were placed in workhouses considered to have mendicancy endemic in them, so that the need for separation was obvious. The nationally prescribed separation of children into district schools or separate schools was seen as inappropriate and unworkable in a rural area. For this reason, in county workhouses, children were rigidly and

completely separated in their own wards, so that different rules and regulations could be applied to them. They were treated and hence institutionalised very differently from other classes of inmate. Increasingly, "Less Eligibility" was not seen as an inviolable principle with regard to the rescue of children from lifelong pauperism.

To the casual observer a more, rather than less, eligible treatment of pauper inmates in workhouses was apparent. They lived in adequate workhouse accommodation, which was regularly cleaned, although sometimes overcrowded. They were given regular but uninteresting food, which was cooked in sanitary conditions and their health was regularly monitored, with illness and injuries promptly treated by trained medical staff. This may have appeared particularly so for child paupers, who were also provided with an intellectual, moral and industrial training superior to that offered to their non pauper contemporaries, at least for the first couple of decades after 1834. Long stay, orphaned and deserted child inmates were also provided with apprenticeships, sometimes at union expense, and once apprenticed greater care was taken of these children than that of non pauper apprentices.

The theory behind the workhouse differed from the practise. This was because once opened the workhouses filled not with able bodied adult mendicants, but with large numbers of aged and young individuals. The single

deterrent purpose of the workhouse was inappropriate to these classes of pauper. The aged were to be reset for a future life, although many of them came to the workhouse to die, and the young were there to be set, rather than reset, on a non pauper future. The "Principles of Less Eligibility" and of "National Uniformity", the major Benthamite tenets of the New Poor Law, thus caused problems from the outset, particularly regarding children. Some Worcestershire Guardians continued to adhere to these outmoded ideas, so that "Less Eligibility" differed from place to place, particularly in relation to child paupers. Guardians, such as those at Martley, over a long period of time resisted innovation in the treatment of child paupers for this reason. By 1847, when the Poor Law Board was created, children were treated as a special case in some unions, but elsewhere the twin principles were still adhered to. Most markedly, Dudley Union was willing to offer far more to paupers, particularly children, than a strict adherence to "Less Eligibility" allowed, whereas some rural unions, such as Martley, continued to apply the Principle. The practise initially adopted in Worcestershire workhouses was based on Poor Law Central Authority advice, but the approach of union Guardians and officers differed from place to place dependent on local circumstances and on the interactions of the various personalities involved.

**vii. The workhouse as a total institution.**

Goffman suggested:

Total institutions frequently claim to be concerned with rehabilitation, that is, with resetting the

inmates self regulatory mechanism so that after he leaves he will maintain the standards of the establishment of his own accord.<sup>14</sup>

This was the description Goffman gave in his classical sociological study Asylums (1968) of the effects of a "total institution" on its inmates. It exactly describes the purpose of the workhouses set up under the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834. Initially, the intention had been to reset all pauper inmates in the same way, so that they were rescued from lifelong pauperism. This was to be done by a single system in which all paupers, no matter what their age or sex, were to be treated exactly similarly in the workhouse, a "total institution", initially designed to be as efficient as possible at reprogramming individuals. The whole regime of the workhouse had this as its aim. The obligation of the staff to maintain certain humane standards of treatment for inmates presents problems in itself, but a further set of characteristic problems is found in the constant conflict between humane standards on the one hand and institutional efficiency on the other.<sup>15</sup> Goffman described the conflicts between the caring and efficiency role of the staff of an institution, the very conflicts highlighted in this study. This analysis was particularly appropriate with regard to workhouse school teachers, who were in general caring individuals, whose status improved between 1834 and 1871 partly because of their improved efficiency.

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14. GOFFMAN, E., Asylums, Penguin, 1968, p.69.

15. Ibid. p.76.

This possibly related to the influence of a more rigid school inspection, although this caused them to adopt coping strategies, such as barking at inspector's questions, as part of their attempts to improve. Unfortunately, this caused their humane approach to be eroded. The whole tenor of the workhouse was aimed at improved efficiency and any impediment to this was dealt with. Whilst school teachers, and other workhouse officers who dealt with inmate children, became more efficient, workhouse education undoubtedly improved in measurable quality (as determined by inspection). However, this was at a cost because it appeared likely that the inter-personal relationship between workhouse pupils and teacher was worsened by the process. The prime aim of the workhouse, which was a "total institution" as defined by Goffman,<sup>16</sup> was to prevent children becoming hereditary paupers, although the staff were not unscathed by their institutional experience. Confinement of workhouse staff ensured that they too became institutionalised and from the present study of Worcestershire it appeared that this was recognised by staff members who talked in terms of the workhouse being "too confined". Many chose not to make a career of their Poor Law offices, escaping being "tainted" by pauperism which was regarded as extremely contagious and disease like. Workhouse officers were certainly not considered immune from it. They too, like children in the workhouse

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16. GOFFMAN, Ibid. pp.15-16.

would succumb if they remained there for too long. Doctors, who were generally middle class individuals, were reticent to take up Poor Law Medical Officers posts, because they recognised that this prejudiced their private patients against them.

Whilst suggesting that inmate pauper children were more eligible, this judgement may be an illusion, because such advantages had to be balanced against the distinct disadvantages of workhouse life. These were most marked for permanent child inmates, who, unlike adults and their dependent children, could not leave the workhouse at three hours notice. Once such individuals had reached a level of destitution where they countenanced entry to the workhouse, gaining the epithet "pauper", they were considered tainted for life and subsequent entry to the workhouse did not have the same impact on them again. Some individuals were undoubtedly not deterred by the workhouse, although some people preferred to starve rather than enter it. Other people coming to the workhouse for the first time were so influenced by their experience there that they never returned, yet others undoubtedly became habitual users of these facilities, accepting it as a solution to distress, such as unemployment, illness, or in the case of women, confinement. However, destitute or orphaned children, had no choice, remaining in the workhouse for as long as the union authorities deemed they should. The workhouse's effectiveness depended on the length of

stay. Institutionalisation was most effective with this group, although whilst they gained the advantages suggested, they suffered disadvantages of an institutional life devoid of personal fulfilment and individuality. Initially it was presumed that the same environment meant to deter adult paupers was appropriate to the needs of the developing child. It was difficult to equate negative freedoms from hunger, disease and unemployment, with positive freedoms of speech and action and most importantly the freedoms of choice and individuality. Given these circumstances, the workhouse was a "total institution". It had been designed that way to attain its prime aim; to deter individuals from becoming lifelong burdens on the poor rates. This was considered most important in the case of child paupers.

**viii. The New Poor Law: A developing bureaucracy.**

The initial structure of the Central Poor Law Administration was simple. It had a directorate, consisting of the three Poor Law Commissioners, together with a permanent secretary and a number of Assistant Poor Law Commissioners each with a regional responsibility. Almost immediately, however, it became apparent that the regions given to Assistant Commissioners were too large. These regions were redrawn and more Assistant Commissioners were appointed. Soon, however, the task was again too great, and this time additional specialised inspectors were appointed. These were of lower status than Assistant Poor Law Commissioners. They included workhouse inspectors,



school inspectors and later inspectors of medical and culinary provisions. Inevitably, finance had to be controlled, initially by a system where a single auditor for each union was appointed who sent his accounts to a central auditor. This proved impractical and District Auditors were appointed by an expanded Audit Department at Somerset House, the headquarters of the Central Poor Law Authority. These two examples of specialisation were symptomatic of bureaucratisation.

The process of bureaucratisation created a changed national administrative structure, but also caused a change in Board of Guardians' minutes. The bulk of communication between central and local Poor Law officials (or vice versa) was continually reducing between 1834 and 1871. Its nature also altered with individually drafted hand written letters no longer being sent in both directions. These were replaced by printed pro forma. Thus administration became habitual. Correspondence, after 1847, increasingly emanated from specialist officials and was distinctive. For instance, the Auditors' Department, the School Inspector and other departments increasingly used special pro forma letters. Whilst this process was inevitable it did alter the previously subjective nature of correspondence. Comments became more guarded and this militated against one major purpose of this study, to describe the condition and treatment of individual child paupers.

As the Central Poor Law Administration became more

bureaucratic, so did the local administration. This consisted of; an elected Board of Guardians, a Clerk, who was usually a local solicitor, a Relieving Officer, responsible for determining who received relief and the nature of the aid given, together with a Medical Officer responsible for a district of the union. The workhouse was staffed by a Master and Matron, often a husband and wife, who were helped by a porter. Soon after 1834 it became apparent that this structure was inadequate for the task set, which had been underestimated. The problems of running the workhouse for the Master and Matron, even with the porter's help, were great. Although rules and regulations allowed the appointment of school staff and a Chaplain this was not compulsory and was not initially proceeded with in most county unions. Soon, however, when problems became apparent, school staff were appointed, as was a Chaplain who had to be an Anglican. The Poor Law Authorities believed that the Chaplain would have a controlling influence, because, invariably, he was a person with the highest social status in the local Poor Law hierarchy. It was presumed that he would be orthodox in his adherence to the ideology of utilitarian Poor Law administration. His controlling influence was apparent amongst Boards of Guardians in the county. Gradually, between 1847 and 1871 other staff such as nurses, cooks, industrial trainers, bakers, millers, shoemakers and tailors were added to workhouse staffs in larger unions, which had more finance available to appoint such officers. Small

unions, such as Tenbury Wells and Upton-on-Severn, were unable even to continue to employ a schoolmistress because there were too few children, again illustrating the contrast between large and small unions.

Locally bureaucratisation much influenced Clerks to Boards of Guardians, who had initially spent up to one day a week on their Poor Law duties. Gradually this increased as they became responsible for more correspondence with the Central Authority and inevitably this meant increasing their expertise in Poor Law matters. They were now consulted by the Guardians on interpretations of the Poor Law. In larger unions they became Poor Law professionals, causing their correspondence with the Central Authority to change, because it now contained implicit understandings about Poor Law interpretation. This research on Worcestershire has attempted to regain such interpretations, although this understanding is inevitably incomplete. What developed, very quickly, in the Poor Law administration of Worcestershire was a bureaucracy. In part this improved the efficiency of administration, but it did cause problems for individual inmate children.

#### **ix. The New Poor Law: An imposed morality.**

The Poor Law had originated as a punitive measure, intended to sanitise society against the dangers of pauperism. It became changed in the case of children, who were now to be given advantages, as they were regarded as blameless social unfortunates. The

definition of poverty for this group had thus been radically altered. Himmelfarb<sup>17</sup> has suggested that, whilst the New Poor Law continued to be the imposition of an alien elite moral code on the destitute working classes, the definition of poverty and the ascription of its causes had altered, causing the perceived nature of poverty to alter also, together with the philosophy of the Poor Law. In Worcestershire, as elsewhere, whilst adult paupers continued to be regarded as a social danger, afflicted as they were with the contagious disease of pauperism, society became more discriminating. Within the "closed institution" of the workhouse differential treatment was possible, although there was variation between workhouses. In part this was due to the attitude of Guardians, but the size of the pauper child population was imperative, as was the character of workhouse officers. Impression gleaned from Guardians' Minute Books will tend to be misleading, because most interaction between pauper children and the workhouse officers went unrecorded. There was, however, some change in attitude towards child paupers detectable from Guardians' minute books in some county unions. They ceased to be treated less eligibly and were given superior treatment to that afforded to the children of the lowest level of independent labourer outside the workhouse (the normal definition of "Less Eligibility" applied). However, what was impossible to calculate was

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17. HIMMELFARB, G., The Idea of Poverty, Faber, 1984.

the value of freedom foregone by such children. The New Poor Law in Worcestershire did impose a middle-class morality on working-class pauper children, as suggested by Himmelfarb. However, to some individual children this was functional as it improved their employment prospects.

The findings of this study are in broad agreement with those of many social histories of the New Poor Law produced in the last four decades. However, these are at variance with some of the findings of administrative histories of the New Poor Law, such as those by Ross<sup>18</sup> and Obermann,<sup>19</sup> whose purpose was very different from that for this study. The prime sources used also differed, as did the modes of exploiting them. Perhaps inevitably, the greatest congruence was between the findings of Digby,<sup>20</sup> in her investigation of the New Poor Law in Norfolk, and this study. The great similarities between Norfolk and Worcestershire between 1834 to 1871 with regard to the size and nature of the population, the distribution of that population in a rural setting, and the local economy was probably the reason for this. Whilst Worcestershire was not as directly influenced by James Kay, who had introduced a pupil teacher system at Gressenhall Workhouse, it was much influenced by T.B. Browne, the H.M.I. for the area, who opposed the setting up of district schools in the county. This approach to

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18. ROSS, Op. cit.

19. OBERMANN, Op. cit.

20. DIGBY, Op. cit.

educating and training workhouse children was singularly inappropriate in a rural area, where there were too few children to sustain such a school, but Browne's influence, against such schools, made the resistance of Guardians to rejecting this idea more acceptable.

The initial purpose of this study was to increase the author's understanding of why the workhouse was feared by his grandparents. It has attained this aim, for what they clearly feared was institutionalisation, which once completed might blight their lives. It has, however, done more than this, because it has developed a measure of empathy with working-class people in the past. Whilst this can never be complete, it is worth striving for, because this is essential to any real understanding of the past. The study has also raised some interesting issues, some of which mark Worcestershire off as different from other areas.

There are, however, inevitably many similarities between the findings of this study and those of other social histories of the New Poor Law between 1834 and 1871. It adds to our understanding of the development and working of systematic institutional solutions to the problems of the pauperised poor in England in the middle third of the nineteenth century. Hopefully, it will also provoke others to investigate the New Poor Law in other geographical localities and for other classes of pauper. For instance there is a clear need for someone to study the mode of treatment of aged paupers, those that were

sick and indeed those who were mentally ill. Without continued study, a complete understanding of a vital part in the development of the Welfare State in England will be impossible.

The mass of detail collated in this study enabled a clearer impression to be gained of the everyday life of pauper children under the New Poor Law. It focuses on a single class of pauper in thirteen different unions over thirty seven years and is thus unusual in the narrowness of its focus and the breadth of its geographical and time span. It illustrates well the methodological distinction between social and administrative histories of the New Poor Law in a county, which although essentially rural contained some very urban unions. This enabled a new perspective, questioning the belief in a separate rural and urban Poor Law to be developed. There was a continuum between these two ideal types of local administration, with the level of usage, rather than the urban or rural nature of the union, determining how overt was the social control function of the workhouse. In all cases it was clearly a "total institution", which altered its nature over time as perceptions of the causes and treatment of pauperism changed. The purpose of the workhouse throughout the period 1834 to 1871 continued to be as a deterrent which imposed an alien middle-class morality and culture on working class children. Arguably deterrence endures as features of modern welfare policy.

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A.P.L.C. Robert Graves.....	33
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1838.....	4th.....	1295.
1839.....	5th.....	1249/1295.
1840.....	6th.....	1295.
1841.....	7th.....	1339.
1842.....	8th.....	1386.
1843.....	9th.....	1434.
1844.....	10th.....	1493.
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1846.....	12th.....	1662.
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1849.....	1st.....	1806.
1850.....	2nd.....	1866.
1851.....	3rd.....	1925.
1852.....	4th.....	1984.
1853.....	5th.....	2069.
1854.....	6th.....	2155.
1855.....	7th.....	2333.
1856.....	8th.....	2300.
1857.....	9th.....	2385.
1858.....	10th.....	2442.
1859.....	11th.....	2489.
1860.....	12th.....	2591.

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1861.....	13th.....	2666.
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**UNION No. 526 - BROMSGROVE.**

Location. b251.

Accession No. 400.

1836-8.....	Parcel.	1(i).
1838-40.....	Parcel.	1(ii).
1840-2.....	Parcel.	2(i).
1842-4.....	Parcel.	2(ii).
1844-7.....	Parcel.	3.
1847-50.....	Parcel.	4.
1850-6.....	Parcel.	5.
1856-65.....	Parcel.	6.
1865-71.....	Parcel.	7.
1871-6.....	Parcel.	8.

**UNION No. 527 - DROITWICH.**

Location. b251.

Accession No. 401.

1836-8.....	Parcel.	1(i).
1838-40.....	Parcel.	1(ii).
1840-4.....	Parcel.	2.
1844-8.....	Parcel.	3.
1848-50.....	Parcel.	4.
1850-3.....	Parcel.	5.
1853-5.....	Parcel.	6.
1855-7.....	Parcel.	7.
1857-9.....	Parcel.	8.
1859-62.....	Parcel.	9.
1862-4.....	Parcel.	10.
1865-7.....	Parcel.	11.
1867-9.....	Parcel.	12.
1869-72.....	Parcel.	13.

UNION No. 530 - **KIDDERMINSTER**

Location. b251.

Accession No. 403

1836-8.....	Parcel.	1.
1838-40.....	Parcel.	2.
1840-1.....	Parcel.	3.
1842-4.....	Parcel.	4.
1844-5.....	Parcel.	5.
1845-7.....	Parcel.	6.
1847-9.....	Parcel.	7.
1849-51.....	Parcel.	8.
1851-4.....	Parcel.	9.
1854-6.....	Parcel.	10.
1856-8.....	Parcel.	11.
1858-9.....	Parcel.	12.
1859-61.....	Parcel.	13.
1861-2.....	Parcel.	14.
1862-3.....	Parcel.	15.
1863-4.....	Parcel.	16.
1864-6.....	Parcel.	17.
1866-7.....	Parcel.	18.
1867-9.....	Parcel.	19.
1869-72.....	Parcel.	20.

UNION No. 532 - **MARTLEY.**

Location. b251.

Accession No. 406.

1863-5.....	Parcel.	1.
1865-8.....	Parcel.	2.
1868-72.....	Parcel.	3.

UNION No. 533 - **PERSHORE.**

Location. b251.

Accession No. 409.

1835-7.....	Parcel.	1.
1837-41.....	Parcel.	2.
1841-4.....	Parcel.	3.
1844-6.....	Parcel.	4.
1846-9.....	Parcel.	5.
1849-52.....	Parcel.	6.
1852-6.....	Parcel.	7.
1856-60.....	Parcel.	MISSING.
1860-66.....	Parcel.	8.
1866-70.....	Parcel.	9.
1870-3.....	Parcel.	10.

UNION No. 536 - **TENBURY-WELLS.**

Location. b251.

Accession No. 413.

1836-9.....	Parcel.	1.
1839-41.....	Parcel.	2.
1841-6.....	Parcel.	3.
1847-51.....	Parcel.	4.
1851-5.....	Parcel.	5.
1855-61.....	Parcel.	6.
1861-7.....	Parcel.	MISSING.
1867-72.....	Parcel.	7.

**UNION No. 537 - UPTON-ON-SEVERN.**

Location. 251.

Accession No. 414.

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1838-40.....	Parcel.	2.
1840-3.....	Parcel.	3.
1843-8.....	Parcel.	4.
1848-53.....	Parcel.	5.
1853-9.....	Parcel.	6.
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1869-71.....	Parcel.	8.

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#### **COMPUTER PROGRAMMES.**

**SUPER-DIET** written by Surrey University Computer Service and belonging to Worcester College of Higher Education was used for dietary analysis of workhouse dietaries.

**NEW WORD 2** was used in word-processing this thesis.